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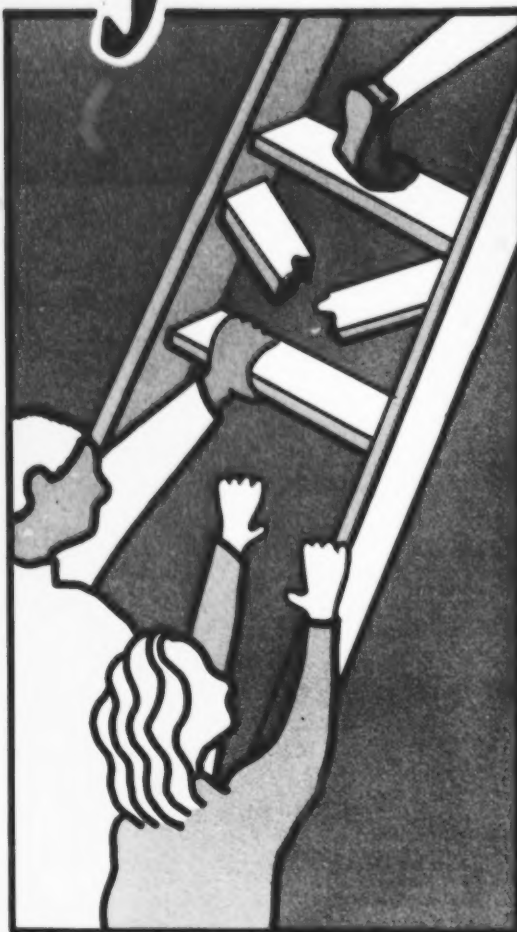
ABSTRACT

Interviews with young workers, their parents, and their employers in seven communities (Birmingham, Alabama; Salinas, California; Esterville, Milford, and Terril, Iowa; Lawrence, Massachusetts; and Detroit, Michigan) show that today's young workers--the 20 million 16- to 24-year-olds who do not plan to go to college--do not receive the support they need to build a financially secure future for themselves, their families, or society. As high-paying, low-skill jobs in manufacturing are replaced with low-paying, higher-skill jobs in the service sector, young people must perform more complicated tasks more efficiently and flexibly for less reward. Working youth comprise more than half their age group and one-sixth of U.S. workers. About three-fourths of all U.S. youth work for pay. Working young people are struggling against odds not faced by their parents or older siblings. Among the common themes revealed in the interviews across communities are that: (1) traditional networks for finding jobs no longer exist; (2) in many cases, jobs in growth industries are not growing fast enough to replace stable, good-paying manufacturing jobs that do not require advanced training; (3) in some cases, low wages become an incentive for young mothers to stay on welfare; and (4) much of the available job training is provided by community organizations that suffer from reduced federal funding, unstable local support, and high employee turnover, and can serve only a small portion of those who need their services. (CML)

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First Jobs



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Young Workers in a Changing Economy

CE 054 950

First Jobs

Young Workers in a Changing Economy

"Now that I'm out in the world, I see you can't live off of \$6 or \$8 an hour. I mean you can get by, but you can't live comfortably. That's something you don't think about in high school. . . . Sometimes, I feel like I started figuring this out too late. . . . I have that feeling that I have to do something, but I don't know what yet."—Andy Nicolas, 19, Salinas

A report of the Education Writers Association

EWA

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The Education Writers Association, founded in 1947, is the national professional association of education reporters and writers.

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Preface

Education reporters find the dividing line between the education beat and others increasingly hard to define. While producers and editors stake their territories by community institutions—schools, city hall, health and hospitals, courts and police, businesses and the economy—this can limit reporting. This is particularly true of the out-of-school lives of the youth we cover.

Over the last year, with assistance from the W.T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship, the Education Writers Association has explored these boundaries.

In a telephone survey of newsrooms, we found that youth were seldom covered outside of schools or jails. It's easy to see what impressions might be left in the community by this oversight. Furthermore, like the employers who refuse to hire youth unless they've had experience—media coverage of the lives of youth out of school often waits until they have aged—unless they go to college. The 'forgotten half'—those who go directly into the workforce—are unseen in the media.

FIRST JOBS is a beginning of that reporting. It examines the changing nature of work and its effect on young people, largely from the perspective of young workers (high school graduates and dropouts) themselves.

FIRST JOBS is based on interviews conducted in seven communities across the nation (Birmingham, Ala.; Salinas, Calif.; Estherville, Milford and Terril, Iowa; Lawrence, Mass.; and Detroit, Mich.). The communities were intended to represent the geographic, racial and cultural diversity of the nation; the economic and demographic challenges faced by communities; and the types of projects and programs available to youth nationwide.

Reporters in each location visited with unions, employers, schools and youth programs to locate young workers. They then interviewed many workers, their parents and their employers. They probed how young people find jobs, the networks they use to pursue new jobs, the jobs available, their attitudes toward work and the future, and how useful their schooling has been. What they found—what follows—is a complex story of many young people isolated in their communities, trapped by changes for which they are unprepared, with few avenues of escape and little assistance.

Raoul Mowatt, a student at Stanford University, began the study by conducting the newsroom survey and developing the initial questions to ask. Sheppard Ranbom wrote the briefing paper used by the reporters, worked with the reporters as they narrowed their focus, edited their stories, and wrote the first and last chapters. Betty Cork, Catherine Foster, Dennis McDonald, Patricia Montemurri, and Lori Olszewski immersed themselves in the areas they were covering, conducting many interviews in order to develop an honest picture of young workers and their lives.

FIRST JOBS looks at an important moment in their lives—their first entry into the world of work. It summarizes what was found, and it suggests directions for other reporters to follow.

Lisa J. Walker
Executive Director
Education Writers Association
February 1990

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PHOTO BY BRIAN WARD/SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY:

STRUGGLING AGAINST ODDS

Today's young workers—the 20 million 16- to 24-year olds who do not plan to go to college—do not receive the support they need to build a financially secure future for themselves, their families, or society.

Interviews in five representative communities around the nation reveal that as we replace high paying, low-skill jobs in the manufacturing sector with low paying, higher skill jobs in the service sector, young people are caught in a trap. They must perform more complicated tasks more efficiently and flexibly for less reward.

Working youth comprise more than half of their age group and one-sixth of the nation's workers. About three-fourths of all youth work for pay.

While business leaders have questioned the ability of young workers to meet the challenge of increased global competition, today's young people are as hardworking and as well-prepared as any generation. The problem is the stakes and demands are higher, the number of young people is smaller, and society has not prepared well for the demographic or economic changes.

In many cases, business is seeing the results of changing demographics and its own limited investment in worker training. The last of the baby boom generation has entered the workforce. With fewer young workers to choose from, industry must now hire workers they previously had the luxury of ignoring.

Many young people entering the workforce lack skills because they were pushed through school in general and vocational classes that provided limited academic training and unsatisfactory links to the world of work. Many are alienated from school, where resources, attention, innovation, and quality programs are focused primarily on the college-bound. When young workers leave, uninterested in obtaining the additional schooling needed to get better jobs, they are left to prepare for work and find a niche for themselves with little support from society.

Unlike other nations, the U.S. has no organized apprenticeship programs to train young workers. This is because, unlike other nations, we see the purpose of education as training young people for college.

While the society bankrolls students who enroll in college at \$5,000 per academic year in combined public and private assistance, we provide few subsidies to help young workers over the comparable four years after they leave high school. Federal job training programs funded under the Job Training Partnership Act (including Job Corps and the Summer Training and Education Program) serve only 5 percent of those eligible, according to the William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship. Community job preparation programs suffer from unstable funding and reach few of those in need.

As the nation strives to maintain its strength during a period of demographic change and global competitiveness, the task of preparing the workforce begins with first jobs.

First jobs (part-time or full-time) are an important moment in the lives of youth—their first entry into the world of work. They are crucial experiences in the transformation of youth into adulthood. They provide access to the world of work and are firm stepping stones on a ladder of career development that begins in school. They allow experimentation—an alternative to academic study that can be exciting to students who are not academically inclined and who are turned off by school. They enable young people to build skills and self-confidence. They are the financial basis by which young people begin families and become established in the community.

Unfortunately, in too many of the communities we looked at, these jobs neither allow a vision of a better future nor provide the skills which will be helpful elsewhere. In some instances, jobs don't exist at all.

While numerous studies have indicated that jobs are changing and demanding new and higher skills, scant attention has been paid to the effects of these changes on young people. What jobs are available? How do they affect young people's lives? What help do youth get from their families and communities? Our reports from around the country (Birmingham, Ala.; Salinas, Calif.; Estherville, Milford, and Terril, Iowa; Lawrence, Mass.; and Detroit, Mich.) show young people struggling against odds not faced by their parents or older siblings. And within these communities, there are many common themes. These themes are:

- Networks to find jobs, once available, do not exist for young workers today. Except for youth from traditional blue-



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collar families, the old ways of getting hired, through family connections, no longer work. These days, young people must rely increasingly on federal, state, and community support programs that serve at-risk youth. Of major importance are programs that help dropouts obtain work readiness skills and equivalency diplomas and provide support for pregnant and parenting teens.

In the words of one businessman in Lawrence, "The parent or uncle or friend that most middle class kids have, these kids don't have. [Support programs] take the place of a networking advocate."

- In many cases, jobs in growth industries are not growing fast enough to replace stable, good-paying manufacturing jobs which do not require advanced training.

Between 1979 and 1985, the U.S. suffered a net loss of 1.7 million manufacturing jobs. Job prospects for young people in fields such as transportation, communications, utilities, government, and agriculture have diminished considerably. The millions of new jobs in the service and retail sectors in many areas have not grown fast enough to replace core industries.

The situation varies according to the structure and dynamics of local and regional economies. In many cases, structural changes have forced employers to hire older, displaced workers for entry-level jobs once widely available to youth. Layoffs in Detroit, Birmingham, and Iowa have limited opportunity for young people.

"There are virtually no openings in the auto industry," United Auto Workers spokesman Karl Mantyla told our reporter. "When there are openings, the workers come from the ranks of the laid off."

In other cases—and particularly in rural areas—loss of jobs has affected old and young alike, forcing a continued exodus to larger towns and cities. According to Iowa State University rural economist Kenneth Stone, "There's a long history of

decline in rural areas. In truth, rural America was set up for horses and buggies and that entire structure is being changed. Some progress is being made, but jobs are still being eliminated at a very fast clip. It's at a point where it's no longer feasible for some towns to function."

In some areas, the shift to a service economy has created opportunities for only a select part of the population. Generally, it is the most disadvantaged students—dropouts, minorities, teen mothers—who lack necessary skills and training in order to be considered qualified for new jobs. This is particularly true in large urban areas, such as Birmingham and Detroit.

- While employers contend they need workers with higher skills, young people say that a tight job market is allowing employers to be more selective.

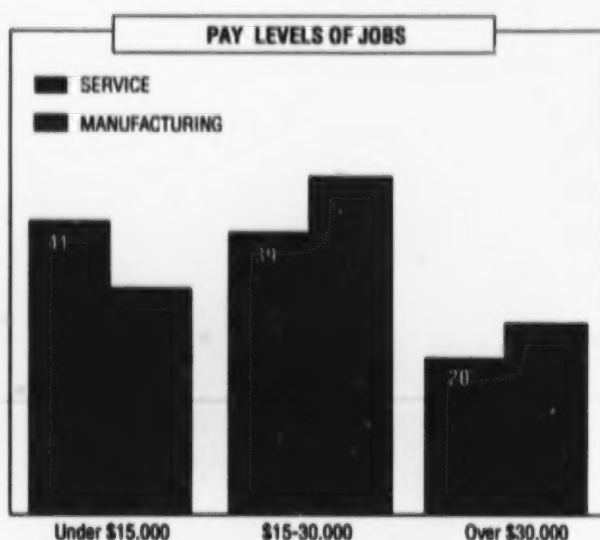
Even low-skilled jobs, such as digging ditches, demand higher skills, employers say, because orders from the truck will come by computer. Workers need the so-called "higher order thinking skills" to solve more complex problems and apply new technology to tasks. Teamwork and ability to communicate will be crucial to bolstering production.

But many observers say that business leaders and schools have not found a way to translate the need for higher skills into a real, understandable program for young people.

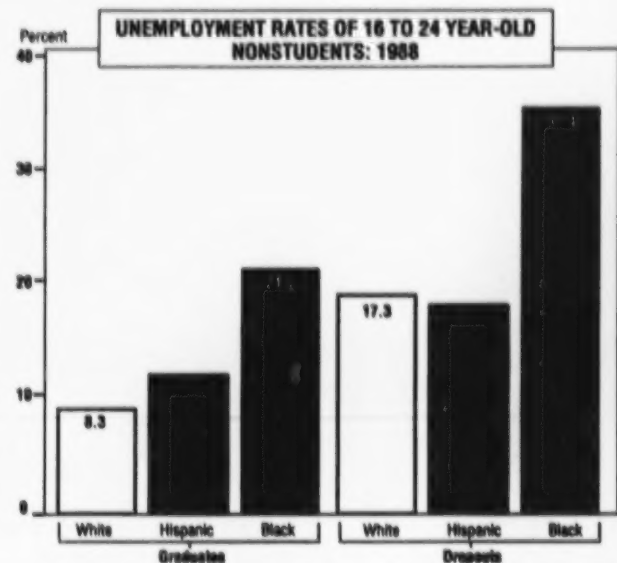
Young people say that, in their experience, a tight job market has encouraged employers to be more choosy.

"First it's a diploma, then five years later they'll want you to have a college degree," said a 21-year-old single mother from Lawrence, Mass. "Next thing they'll want a diploma to do maintenance."

- While many believe that a college diploma will be the new union card for service-area jobs and even factory work, many young people feel "overqualified" for their first jobs. They say they are a lot smarter than what is required for flipping hamburgers, cleaning floors, and putting tags on clothes.



Source: *New England Economic Review*, July-August 1986



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The William T. Grant Foundation
Commission on Work, Family & Citizenship

Workers and their parents say that young people today have to work "beneath their abilities" at jobs that provide little responsibility or possibility for advancement.

"They told me I was smart," said one young Detroit woman, who works in a film processing plant. "I was a good worker, but I didn't have an education, and that would get me another quarter a year."

Observers note that while the fastest growing industries in the U.S. are relatively high skill and high wage, they provide a small number of jobs. The fastest growing occupations in terms of sheer numbers are different, requiring few skills and paying lower wages.

- Many young workers are fighting a heroic struggle to remain economically stable in the midst of difficult circumstances.

Unemployment among young workers is severe and, in most cases, is not the result of laziness or an unwillingness to work. While skills required to work have increased markedly, wages for young workers have declined during the past decade, creating economic hardship for young people and young families. In 1986, working men in their early 20's who graduated from high school earned 28 percent less in constant dollars than the comparable group of youth in 1973. (The income drop was almost twice as high for blacks as it was for whites.)

Those struggling to raise families get up early, rush the children to day care they can barely afford and hurry to jobs that often do not provide health insurance. They cannot buy fresh vegetables for their kids and worry whether they'll make the car and rent payments.

No matter how hard they work, few young families can afford to buy houses. In the past 15 years, housing costs in the U.S. have increased three times faster than income. An average downpayment in 1985 was 50 percent of a buyer's wages, up from 33 percent in 1978, notes demographer Bud Hodgkinson in his recent report, *The Same Client*.

From 1973 to 1986, the median income of young families with children fell by about the same drop in per capita personal income that occurred during the Depression (1929-1933), according to the Children's Defense Fund. The wage decline is in part a result of lower hourly wage rates and partly the result of the continuing shift of employment from manufactur-

ing to the service sector. Observers note that the increasing percentage of families headed by single women also contributed to a poverty rate that doubled between 1973 and 1986.

- In some cases, low wages become an incentive for young mothers to stay on welfare.

Anita Orozco, a teacher in the Salinas High School District program for teen mothers, said, "For many of them, it simply makes more economic sense for them to stay home and receive a grant (welfare) than take many of the low-paying jobs they can get. And that is absurd. We should be able to design some kind of transition program.

"They need transportation. They need child care. They need health insurance while they get their first job and work toward a better job. Otherwise, we'll never break this cycle," Orozco said.

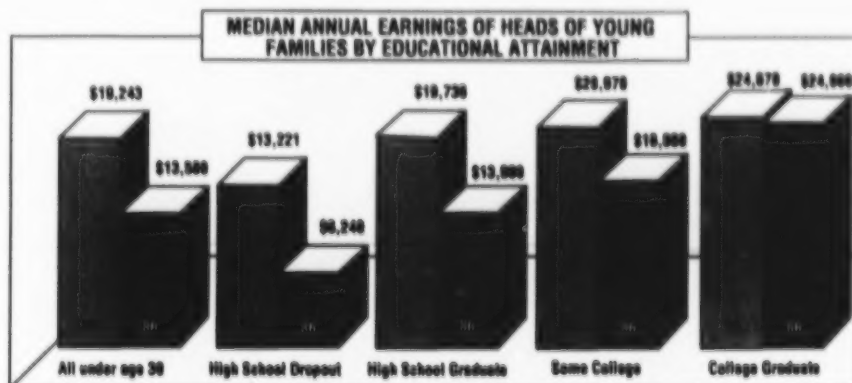
Observers note that forcing people off welfare and into training (as under the federal JOBS program) may create more stress and poverty. Where training leads to jobs that don't pay much, where there is no transportation, no career ladder, no support system, such a move could put more young families in peril.

- Many adults said they were glad to have grown up 30 or 40 years ago. Some adults said that young people today are "flighty," "unreliable," and "more interested in other things beside work." In the words of one Iowa parent, "When they take a job they want to know how many hours they'll have to work. They travel, do things we had to work years to do. When I got started I didn't ask how much time I could have off. I asked how many hours I could work."

But some adults confuse the unwillingness of youth to stay in one job as a sign of moral decay when it may be an attempt for young people to find a better situation for themselves and their families.

Most adults acknowledged that youth have a difficult time going off into a world where jobs pay little and costs are high. They also felt fortunate to have entered the labor force at a time when entrance requirements were open.

"The days are gone forever when you didn't have to graduate from high school before you went down to Dodge or Ford or GM and got a job," said a 47-year-old pipefitter for the Chrysler Corp. "We were fortunate enough to be the last of a dying breed."



Source: Children's Defense Fund/ Center for Labor Market Studies, 1988

1973

1986

• Many young people contend that schools do a poor job preparing them for work. Schools are doing an excellent job, but "only with a few kids," a deputy school superintendent told our reporter.

Educators and society at large tend to believe that everyone goes on to college, when only 40 percent do. Teaching in school emphasizes theory and isolated knowledge that is put together in the course of the learning process. But for many students, particularly those in the vocational and general tracks, learning by listening or reading and the process of cognitive development is too abstract. They feel more comfortable when "learning by doing" and seeing the applications of knowledge.

Many young workers acknowledged that they enjoyed the training they were receiving on the job more than they liked academic training in school. In the words of a carpenter's apprentice in Birmingham: "Every job is different, and the more you do, the more you learn."

Part of the problem with schooling is that teachers, who go from postsecondary education back to school, have little relation to the world of work and have difficulty making academic subjects relevant to the workplace. The young workers interviewed said they had little exposure to the possibility of what they might do after high school unless they voluntarily enrolled in vocational programs. According to one Hispanic teacher in Lawrence, youth today "lack a vision of the future. . . . They don't see what they're going to be."

With little attention from teachers and few specialized programs aimed at preparing young people for work, it is no surprise that so many non-college-bound youth drop out of school or are promoted through grades without mastering basic competencies. The dropout problem is significant in every community we studied, except Iowa.

• Much of the job training that takes place comes from community organizations, which suffer from reduced federal funding, unstable local support, and high employee turnover. These programs—operated in basements, churches, and community centers—serve only a small portion of students who need help. And even where they do serve, they can't create jobs for young people where none exist and wages don't meet living costs.

In the words of a job counselor in Lawrence, pondering the future of a client who has gone through extensive training, helped other people, and done without: "She has all the training, commitment, and desire to make an excellent human services social worker. But to be honest with you, I don't know if I'm going to be able to get her a job. . . ."

"She's 21 years old and has done what society has told her she has to do to succeed. What's going to happen to the psychology of this young lady that after having done these things, having turned her life around against all kinds of odds, she can't get a job?" he asks.

"It's going to be discouraging to her, to teenagers who aren't involved in this program, and to teenagers who are," he says.

Our reporting from around the nation suggests that the nation still has a lot of energy and talent in its youth. But much of that talent is not being directed by society to help either young people or the nation as a whole.

Young people need to be nurtured, motivated, and put to work. As an official from the Alabama state employment office told our reporter: "These kids are our future."

If we do not find a way to make their lives purposeful and successful, our future will be increasingly at risk. Our middle class will become our underclass. A new generation's dream of having a life as good as or better than that of their parents will evade all Americans and their children for time to come.

Sheppard Rambom, editor
Washington, D.C.
February 1990

"It'd be another story if these kids could get a decent job, but about all you can find around here is minimum wage, and I don't know how anybody is going to make it on that."



PHOTO BY BRIANT WADE/SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

Young workers in Salinas, the sons and daughters of migrant workers, cannot realize the dream of having lives that are more stable than those of their parents. Though they do not wish to toil in the fields, they remain close to their families. Many cannot afford to break away.

THE GRAPES OF WRATH REVISITED:

FIRST JOBS IN CALIFORNIA'S SALINAS VALLEY

By Lori Olszewski

Andy Nicolas, 19, the son of a Hispanic farmworker from California's Salinas Valley, talked about surviving on a \$6-an-hour job in a clothing store as he adjusted the cuffs on the crisp white shirt his mother had ironed for him an hour earlier.

"If I was not living at home with my parents, I could not make it on my own financially," said Nicolas, who went to work instead of college when he graduated last year from North Salinas High School in Monterey County, 100 miles south of San Francisco.

In this farming community of Ford pick-up trucks driven by men with weathered faces and cowboy hats, Nicolas is not alone.

While the media reinforces images of a California inhabited by high-income college-educated professionals buying edible flowers and the most expensive houses in the nation, the statistics show a state full of Andy Nicolases.

Most young people in California do not go on to college. In fact, one-third of all high school students do not even finish high school. Of the 250,000 to 300,000 students a year who earn a high school diploma, only a little more than half go on to college or to some form of postsecondary training. And a small percentage of the Californians who enter two or four-year colleges actually receive bachelor or associate degrees—about half of students who go on to four-year colleges and a tenth who go to community colleges.

"Those numbers tell us the majority of young people in this state who enter high school are preparing for a job after graduation or unemployment. We can talk about how we want to change that, but that is the reality," said William A. Popkes, a consultant to the career-vocational education division of the California State Department of Education.

"The state would collapse if these people stayed home, but nobody thinks much about them. This country does not give them the respect they deserve," said Larry Garetto, assistant director of the career-vocational education division in the California Department of Education. "People still talk like everyone has a college degree. That's simply not the case."

Earnings Gap

But there is a widening gap between the salaries earned by those who complete their schooling in high school and their peers who go on to college. Nationally, high school graduates earn, on average, about 40 percent of what college graduates make. Young workers in Salinas like Andy Nicholas have to delay leaving the homes of their parents because their meager salaries can support a car payment or rent, but rarely both.

"The truth is that the cost of living is high and the pay for entry-level jobs is minimal," said Diana Carrillo, the division director of the state and federally funded Center for Employment Training in Monterey County.

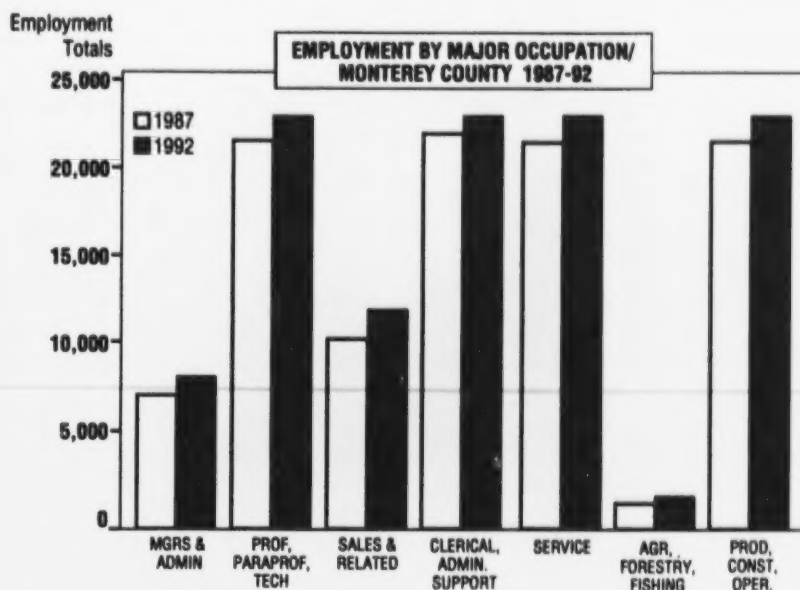
The workplace for high school graduates beginning their first jobs consists of \$6- to \$9-an-hour opportunities in department stores, banks, and other financial institutions or in the bastion of the Salinas economy—the lettuce, broccoli, or strawberry fields of the valley made famous by author John Steinbeck.

"The state would collapse if these people stayed home, but nobody thinks much about them. This country does not give them the respect they deserve. People still talk like everyone has a college degree. That's simply not the case."

Meanwhile, the cost of living is skyrocketing, in part because of the proximity to the prosperous Silicon Valley and San Jose, about an hour's drive. Increasingly, Silicon Valley workers are trying to knock a few thousand dollars off their housing prices by moving south toward Salinas. The new houses springing up north of town, near the Northridge Mall where Nicolas works, are helping to boost already rising costs. Within the last three years alone, the jump in home prices in the Salinas-Monterey area means people need about \$16,000 more today for the down payment than they needed in 1986. (The median

Vital Signs

Population:	363,956 Monterey County (1989)
Racial Composition:	61% Hispanic (1989) 32% white 7% black
Unemployment Rate:	5.3% California 8.3% Monterey County
Per Capita Income:	\$13,197 California 9,390 Salinas
Percentage Who Complete High School:	70% California
Percentage Who Go to College:	57% California 48% Monterey County
Job Growth: Services, retail trade, government, clerical and administrative support	



price of a single-family home in the Monterey area was a whopping \$232,352 in 1989—close to the national high of \$257,535 in San Francisco.)

The local housing market now remains an unattainable dream for people making \$6 an hour or \$12,480 a year.

Nicolas thinks about the comfortable house his father was able to buy many years ago on his income as the supervisor of farm laborers and his eyes fill with worry.

"Sometimes, I feel like I started figuring this out too late. My father is 67, he is not young. I see that I am making it because I can live with them, but they will not always be here," said Nicolas, the youngest of five children.

"I have that feeling that I have to do something, but I don't know what yet," he said.

Family Costs

Those struggling to raise families get up early, rush the children to day care they can barely afford and hurry to jobs that often do not provide health insurance.

They cook dinners of meatless spaghetti and worry they aren't serving their children enough fresh vegetables, grown locally, because they cost too much. A trip to McDonald's is dinner out—and is considered a treat.

Nancy Thorp, 22, a selling supervisor at the Emporium department store in the same mall where Nicolas works, said that she and her husband, Kenneth, a truck driver for the Culligan Water Co., pool their \$16,000 and \$15,000 a year incomes to make ends meet. She makes \$6.80 an hour plus commission.

"If I had a choice, I'd probably stay home and raise my kids but you don't have a choice. You both have to work. We're happy, but we're strapped," said Thorp, the mother of two boys, Joseph, age 4, and Kyle, 8 months.

They rent a house owned by Thorp's grandparents for \$300 a month, well below the market rates in the area where houses rent for more than a \$1,000 a month and apartments go for \$500 to \$800 a month.

"That's what saves us. Otherwise, I think we'd have major money problems," Thorp said.

Still, the money disappears quickly: almost \$500 a month in car payments, \$200 a month for a babysitter, \$75 a month for health insurance, \$100 a month for car insurance, the phone, the gas and electric, the times the children get sick.

"It's a vicious circle," Thorp said. "To make it, you both have to work. To work, you end up with two car payments because you both need cars to get to your jobs. Then there's the babysitter. And to cut down on the babysitter, you work weekends when your husband is off and then you never see each other."

The expense of going out to dinner and a movie is out of the question for their budget.

"That can turn into a \$70 night," she said. She laughs when asked about whether they plan to buy a home. "We can't even grasp being able to afford the down payment."

A luxury for Thorp would be finding the extra money to get her hair cut.

Welfare Incentive

The widening gap between what it costs to live in California and what entry-level jobs for high school graduates pay actually

"I don't just want to sit here and grow old. I want a house for my kids, and a car, and I want to put my kids in private school. Someday, I want to be able to take my girls to Disneyland."

is encouraging young mothers to stay on welfare, according to a number of employment counselors and the mothers themselves.

"It doesn't make sense for me to get a job that pays the minimum wage or near it. By the time I pay a babysitter, I'm

better off on my grant," said Salinas resident Marta Quiroz, 20, the unmarried mother of two daughters, age 2 and 1, who lives on about \$8,160 a year in welfare. A full-time minimum wage job would pay only about \$8,840 a year before taxes, child care and health insurance payments.

"You'll hear a lot of girls in my place say that. They think, 'Why should I work to pay a babysitter \$100 to \$200 a week when I can take care of my own kids?' And you don't get health insurance with a lot of those jobs," she said.

Still, Quiroz does not want to spend her life on welfare. She is studying to pass the high school equivalency test. She then hopes to get a job as a clerical person in a medical office, where she will work while she goes back to school. Her dream is to become a chiropractor.

"I don't just want to sit here and grow old. I want a house for my kids, and a car, and I want to put my kids in private school," Quiroz said. "Someday, I want to be able to take my girls to Disneyland."

Emphasis on College-Bound

Observers note that to keep students out of the welfare trap, the schools must do a better job preparing students to enter work with a good work ethic and necessary skills.

"If I could I'd like to go through high school again. I was mostly there to have fun, girls and so forth. I had kind of an idea that maybe I'd go to junior college, but I never really thought about what you had to do to get there. I just didn't see how important it was."

But young workers and educators interviewed for the "First Jobs" project said that the emphasis of education in California is on the college-bound. Teachers, who go from postsecondary education back to school, have little relation to the world of work and have difficulty making academic subjects relevant to the workplace. The young workers interviewed said they had

little exposure to what work they might do after high school unless they voluntarily enrolled in vocational programs.

Nicolas said, "If I could I'd like to go through high school again. I was mostly there to have fun, girls and so forth. I had kind of an idea that maybe I'd go to junior college, but I never really thought about what you had to do to get there. I just didn't see how important it was."

When his girlfriend's family moved across town their senior year and she had to attend a different high school, he transferred to be with her.

"That was stupid, wasn't it? But I guess it kind of shows what I was thinking about in high school," said Nicolas, who said he believed he was lucky to obtain a job as an assistant manager above the \$4.25 an hour minimum wage in California.

"Now that I'm out in the world, I see you can't live off \$6 or \$8 an hour," he said. "I mean you can get by, but you can't live comfortably. That's something you don't think about in high school."

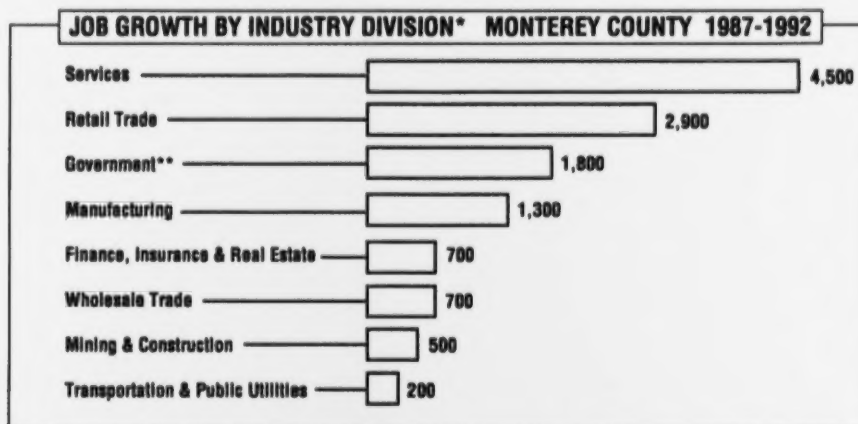
Language Barriers

One of the biggest problems facing young workers in Salinas and throughout California is the language barrier. As the Hispanic population becomes a more significant presence throughout the most populous regions of the country, lack of adequate facility with English may cause problems in the workplace.

Young people in Salinas, many of whom were raised in homes where one or both parents never learned English, say it is possible to get by in their city speaking primarily Spanish. For example, all three billboards for a major supermarket chain recently appeared in Spanish. About 21 percent of the county's future workers, today's school students, have limited proficiency in English.

While the cultural diversity of communities like Salinas could be an economic advantage if it results in a workforce fluent in other languages in addition to English, the reality is that few people are proficient in either language.

Carrillo, the employment training director for Monterey County, said, "The majority of the people we serve are Spanish speaking, but they are not Spanish literate. They cannot write it or speak it well. And their English isn't up to an eighth-grade level."



(*) Employment is by place of work & does not include persons involved in labor-management trade disputes.

(**) Includes all civilian government employees regardless of activity in which engaged.

"That effectively closes the door on them for starting jobs in lots of the service areas, like clerical work where communication skills are needed. In my work, I see that a high school diploma does not guarantee that people can read or write English at high school levels," she said.

"In the patriarchal Hispanic family, family obligations often come before everything, including a job. I have young people who say they will be absent from work to go to their uncle's birthday party in San Leandro. The pressure from the family is great."

Cultural differences have resulted in young Hispanic workers training to be bank tellers who ask "What you want?" when approached by customers. And employers and business people tell of battles between the etiquette of the Hispanic family and the expectations of employers.

"In the patriarchal Hispanic family, family obligations often come before everything, including a job," said Keith Badham, a retail instructor in Salinas. "I have young people who say they will be absent from work to go to their uncle's birthday party in San Leandro. The pressure from the family is great."

While being interviewed for the "First Jobs" project, Karen Towle, a banking and finance instructor in the Mission Trails occupational program at Salinas High School, received a phone call from a father who explained his son would miss bank training class because the father needed the teenager to operate a forklift. In other instances, Towle said, her students disappear for months at a time when their parents take them on lengthy visits to Mexico.

"They are good kids who have a lot of potential but who are not going to make it in the workplace without some help making the transition," Badham said.

Agricultural Jobs

Agricultural employment has been steadily increasing in Monterey County, adding about 1,000 jobs a year, growth attributed to more acreage devoted to strawberries, a more labor intensive crop.

"This is still farming country," said Dick Nutter, agricultural commissioner in the valley. "You can call us the salad bowl for the nation. We're the number one vegetable-producing county in the nation and we're among the top six or seven states for overall agriculture production."

During the peak season from about June to September, agriculture is the largest employer in the county, putting about 35,000 people to work. But during the winter months those jobs dry up and the unemployment rate, which averages about 8 percent, jumps to the 12 percent range.

If farmworkers do not want to leave their families and follow the crops south, they go on unemployment.

The seasonal uncertainty of agriculture work combined with the hard physical labor involved makes it unattractive to many young people like Nicolas who have chosen not to follow their parents into the fields.

"I really respect what my father did, how he worked his way up to be a supervisor of the crews, but it is not for me. For one thing, I have some trouble with my back. I couldn't play football and I don't think I could do farm work physically without a lot of pain," Nicolas said.

Nutter said, "Even with the new technology, there's no way you're going to pick a strawberry without bending down."

Julia Duran, 21, the daughter of a farmworker who works as a secretary, said her parents had their children work summers in the fields so they would know how difficult the work is and see the value of education—and an office job.

"That's all it took for me," Duran said. "You'd wake up and not be able to get out of bed without hurting after a day picking strawberries. I remember my dad getting up before the sun was up and it would be raining and cold. And he'd have to live down south every winter to follow the crops. It's not an easy life."

Young people with high school degrees who don't want to go to the fields end up in retail stores or in offices. In Monterey County, like the rest of the nation, most of the new jobs in the next five years will be in retail or service industries.

Nationwide, the occupation expected to experience the most numerical growth in the next five years is that of salesperson, about 1.2 million or 6 percent of all the new jobs, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. It is also one of the two fastest growing occupations in Salinas. That means the predicament faced by Nicolas will be shared by many others.

"It's difficult for the high school graduate looking for work unless they go to the retail or service industries," said Arlyn Mayes, manager of the state Employment Development Department office in Salinas.

Uncertain Future

Despite the projections for growth in service areas, the October earthquake in Northern California and a proposal to close a nearby Army base, Fort Ord, have some Monterey County residents worried about the future.

After the quake, tourists stayed away from the oceanside towns of Monterey and Carmel, even though those communities were not heavily damaged in the quake. Hotel, restaurant and shop owners—the growing service industries—all reported a sharp decline in business.

Then, a proposal surfaced to close Fort Ord, home of the Seventh Infantry division, the rapid deployment unit that most recently participated in the Panama invasion. The base, located on the sand dunes adjacent to the Pacific Ocean west of Salinas, employs about 15,129 military personnel and about 5,000 civilians, the people who buy the clothes that Nicolas sells and frequent the businesses expected to grow.

The employment picture in Monterey County could change drastically if Fort Ord closes, according to local residents. Andy Nicolas and others like him would face an even more uncertain future—unable to move out of their parents' homes or support families of their own.



PHOTO BY BEAUTY WARDEN SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

"... In a lot of ways, it seems there is more support for you if you don't get married and go on welfare. . . . What is society doing for young families like us trying to make it?"



PHOTO BY BETTY COOK

Birmingham, once a gritty steel city, transformed itself into a modern health-care and financial center. The city represents what can happen to the labor force following a period of rapid economic change. While the new service-based economy created jobs for bright young women in health careers, retail sales, clerical work, and banking, young white men, blacks, school dropouts, and single mothers must struggle to get by.

FIRST JOBS IN THE NEW SOUTH:

BIRMINGHAM'S 'GROWTH' ECONOMY CREATES UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

By Betty Cork

In 1970, Alabama's largest city—founded on the iron and coal deposits of the north Alabama mountains—was dominated by heavy manufacturing and mining and the presence of U.S. Steel. The city's skyline was obscured by a cloud of smoke and pollution above the steel mills, a matter of scorn to those from the more agricultural areas of the state, but a source of some pride to locals. Aware of the financial benefits of being the steel center for the New South, residents would boast: "In Birmingham, you can see what you breathe."

But the success of the Japanese steel industry during the 1970s forced Birmingham's steel plant to cut production in 1983, crippling the local economy. That year, the unemployment rate in Jefferson County jumped to 12.8 percent—from 8.9 percent in 1980. A statewide recession caused Alabama to have the highest unemployment rate in the nation (14.4 percent) in 1982. The city was forced to complete a rapid diversification of its economy. Of 75,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector in the 1970's, one-third, or 25,000, jobs were lost. The city moved from an emphasis on mining, steel, fabricated metals, and manufacturing apparel and transportation equipment to developing new jobs in fields such as wholesale and retail trade, services, insurance, and real estate.

Today, the unemployment rate has stabilized at about 5.3 percent—very close to the national average of 5 percent. The glass windows of the banks, public utilities, and investment firms reflect the clear air of a city that no longer relies upon manufacturing for its economic base.

The largest employer in Birmingham—and in the state—is now the University of Alabama at Birmingham, including the medical school and hospital, which together employ about 11,500 workers. Some 2,000 of these employees have only a high school education, according to Roger S. McCullough, director of employment.

UAB hires about 30 new high school graduates a year, McCullough said. These include clerks, secretaries, maintenance staff, parking attendants, computer operators and food service staff. UAB, like most universities, has only clerical and housekeeping jobs at the university. The hospital hires many health care professionals, but most employees above the housekeeping level must have some post-high school education.

Range of Opportunities

Howard Melton, who heads the Job Training Partnership Act program for Birmingham, said the shift to a service economy is helping high school graduates find work at a respectable wage.

While U.S. Steel paid excellent wages, jobs were not available except to those with contacts. "I would think a kid 18 years old today would have a better chance than in the 1970s simply because of the wide diversity," he said.

Yet, based on interviews with young people for the "First Jobs" project, the job opportunities available in Birmingham appear to provide significant advantages to young whites, and particularly women, who complete high school and have family support, self-confidence, and good work habits. They can find good jobs in attorneys' offices and the large banks and public utilities firms based in Birmingham.

In Birmingham, many young people find work based on leads they can get from parents or friends. . . . In some fields—such as construction, manufacturing, and steel—who you know is everything.

White males have an inside track to positions in the factories that have survived, though most of the remaining jobs have gone to older workers. White males also have opportunities in construction, which is booming with the demand for more office towers, shopping areas, condominiums, and expansion of the UAB campus and its medical facilities.

Vital Signs

Population:	917,000
Racial Composition:	66% white 33% black 1% other
Unemployment Rate:	5.5% total population 15% young workers
Per Capita Income:	\$9,615 Alabama 8,954 Birmingham
Percentage Who Complete High School:	67%
Job Growth:	Retail trade, medical services, wholesale trade, transportation, public utilities, finance, insurance and real estate
Job Decline:	Mining, steel, apparel industry, fabricated metals and transportation equipment



PHOTO BY BETTY COOK

For blacks, school dropouts, and teen mothers, the job picture is bleak. They find it difficult to succeed in the new service economy without skills or family influence. While Birmingham has had a black mayor for more than 10 years, it is still overcoming the image of being a racist community. Blacks are no longer barred from union membership or from jobs, but many still bear the burden of two centuries of economic and educational deprivation. And today, a significant number of new jobs are located in the suburbs, distant and unfamiliar locations for inner-city kids. Those disadvantaged youth who find work are often employed in the most menial jobs, such as custodians and maids for cleaning services, the traditional careers of black women in the South, and as hamburger flippers in fast-food restaurants.

Necessary Connections

In Birmingham, many young people find work based on leads they can get from parents or friends. The more successful seem to stay at their jobs until they've been promoted or gain enough experience and contacts to find more satisfying positions elsewhere. In some fields—such as construction, manufacturing, and steel—who you know is everything.

Kenneth Wyatt, director of the apprentice program for the local carpenters union, receives more applications than the apprenticeship program can accept. The program is limited by the labor market because it is necessary to find work for the apprentices, or they will move on to something else. And there is a limit on the ratio of apprentices to journeymen carpenters, he said.

While Wyatt said he recruits in high schools in the Birmingham area, in fact, every apprentice interviewed for the "First Jobs" project got into the program through connections—a relative or a boss on a job. One of the apprentices is, in fact, Wyatt's younger son.

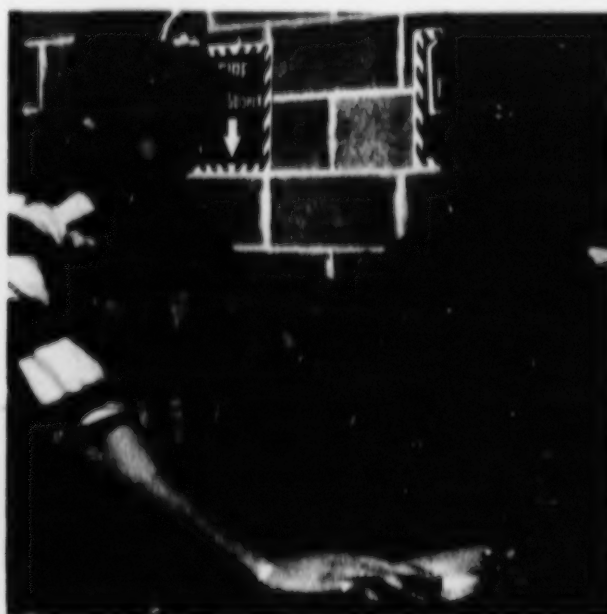


PHOTO BY BETTY COOK

Jason Jones, left, learns welding as part of his training as an apprentice carpenter. Bruce Blackmon works with wood as training he hopes will lead to owning his own construction company.

Jason Jones, a 1986 graduate from Parrish High School in Walker County, got into the apprenticeship program with the help of a former boss—a superintendent on a construction crew.

John Hinson started in construction by working for the same construction firm in which his father was employed. "I'm just following in his footsteps," said Hinson.

"I think it's pretty rough on people out of high school trying to get out to find a job with no experience or minimal experience," said Bruce Blackmon, a 20-year-old dropout from Corner High School, who took a General Education Development test, or GED, in 1987 to get the high school diploma required for becoming an apprentice.

Blackmon's father is in the construction industry and steered him toward the program, which has found him steady work with several companies.

"I was lucky. I came down and filled out an application. A couple of months later, they called and started me to work here. It's hard for somebody my age to go somewhere and try to make the kind of money you can make here without experience."

Good Pay, Advancement

Scott Ruple, 21, knew the personnel director at the Golden Flake Potato Chip factory when he applied for a job on the loading dock three years ago. Today, Ruple is a supervisor of loading for the company that has more than 700 sales routes throughout the Southeast.

Most of the young workers at the plant heard about their jobs through friends, acquaintances, coaches, and family members. Once they get their foot inside the door, doing menial tasks for good wages (\$8.10 and \$9.40 an hour for first-year file clerks

and utility workers, respectively) plus 40 percent more in benefits, they are also given opportunities for advancement.

The plant is filled with large rooms where potatoes roll through assembly lines to be processed by machines into potato chips and packaged for sale. In another room, corn is processed into tortilla chips, packaged pop corn and cheese nachos. There are warehouses where the chips are packaged, taken to loading docks and loaded onto trucks all bearing the image of the smiling clown, the company's emblem.

Everybody seems to be happy here. "It's a good place to work and the pay's pretty good," says 23-year-old Terry Loyed, a utility worker in the chip department, who has been at the plant for more than four years and plans to stay.

Rick Bair, 22, heard about a job opening through a fellow churchgoer. He started on the loading dock and now works as a transport driver delivering chips to warehouses near Birmingham. When he is not driving, he works in the shop helping to keep the transport vans in condition. The next step up is to more long-distance driving, delivering snack foods throughout the Southeast.

On the Way Up

Golden Flake employees are not the only young workers in Birmingham who are smiling. Many young white women interviewed for the "First Jobs" project said they are happy in their work situation and have no need of continuing in school.

Tonya Rice, a 17-year-old senior at Minor High School, has an afternoon job at Wal-Mart in nearby Adamsville, working in the electronics department. She hasn't yet entered the workforce full-time, but already she plans to stay with Wal-Mart, which offers opportunities for promotions and raises that will allow her to make a good living.

Sonja Holbrook, a 1987 graduate of Minor High School, is a medical assistant in a doctor's office. "I'm learning more than I could in school," said Sonja, who worked for a group of six pediatric surgeons before taking her present job, which gives her excellent training in computers and billings and provides free medical care. She wants to be a manager, either in business or in the medical field.

Sherri Holladay, who now works as a secretary for a blind attorney, said her first jobs in several department stores gave her little responsibility and lots of headaches. "I knew I was a lot smarter than putting tags on clothes," she says.

Her break came when a friend told her that attorney Tony Coffin was looking for a secretary. Coffin's blindness makes it imperative for him to have someone to drive him back and forth to work and attend court hearings. Holladay said she told him candidly about her credentials, and he decided to give her a chance.

"I do a little bit of everything for Tony because I am his eyes," she said. "It's a great experience. I've learned more than taking a college course because I learn first-hand." Holladay, 19, is married and the mother of a 10-month-old baby girl. While she would like to go back to school to become a paralegal, she admits it might be difficult to do while working full-time and taking care of her family.

Anita Kitchens, 22, is another young woman who is thriving in Birmingham. A securities clerk at Central Bank of the South, Kitchens says neither she nor her truck driver husband need to go to college to lead substantial, middle-class lives.

A business graduate from the vocational program at Minor High School in Birmingham, Kitchens went to work as a restaurant cashier after graduation. Then, at the suggestion of her mother, she applied for a file clerk position at Central Bank's newly constructed main building. She was promoted to a data entry job before becoming securities clerk in the Trust Department a year and a half ago.

The work environment is soothing, reminding one of the bank office in the movie "Working Girl"—pastel walls and windows of tinted glass.

"I think she's done extremely well since she's been here," said Denise Maddox, employment officer for the bank, who noted that most bank employees are college graduates.

Different Opportunities

But not everybody sings the praises of Birmingham's service economy. Working conditions at some of the remaining factories are harsh and offer few opportunities for advancement.

Stence Gilliam, 19, who makes ice cream for Barber Dairies, sees no future with the company. His job is in the hardening room where temperatures are well below freezing summer and winter. "It's cold; it's hard," he said. "It's okay for now. I want to find something better. I couldn't have a family and live on this for the rest of my life."

Cornel Boyd feels that his job at Deaver Industries, which makes light fixtures, has too few opportunities for promotion and that he has too many people ahead of him. He also finds the factory unattractive. "It's a machine shop," he said. "Lots of grease. We use lots of oil."



PHOTO BY BETTY COOK



PHOTO BY BETTY COBB

Blacks have a particularly hard time finding work that pays well. In some cases, there are significant disparities in salaries and responsibilities between young whites and blacks working for the same firm, largely due to the type of training and previous job experience available to workers.

Cathy Nelson is office manager for The Maids, a cleaning service that specializes in private homes in the affluent Homewood and Mountain Brook areas. Cathy, who is white, learned to operate computers with the Alabama Power Company, where she made \$17,500 to start. She married and left town, only to return to Birmingham a few years later. At The Maids, she makes about \$15,000. She says she is doing as well as she could had she gone on to college.

But Kimberly Johnson, a black graduate of Woodlawn High School, works as a cleaning woman for The Maids. After four months on the job, she earns \$3.50 an hour—about half what Nelson makes—though it is a raise from her minimum wage starting salary.

Johnson began her work career working as a nursing assistant and as a counter worker at a burger shop. She would like to go back to school to improve her chances of getting a better job but says she cannot afford to quit work in order to attend classes. ". . . I'll continue to work until I'm able to better myself. How? I don't know. That's a question I ask myself every day."

'Nothing Better to Do'

Many young blacks and teen mothers have a difficult time even finding work. The youth unemployment rate in Birmingham is about 15 percent, but—as in other cities around the nation—about one-third of all young blacks are unemployed, according to Robert Brantley, a labor market analyst for the state employment service in Birmingham.

" . . . I'll continue to work until I'm able to better myself. How? I don't know. That's a question I ask myself every day."

Curtis Wilkerson, an 18-year-old black, sits in the office of the State Employment Service. Since he graduated from Parker High School six months ago, he has worked at several jobs including maintenance at an apartment complex and as a waiter in a restaurant managed by his aunt. He left, he says, when "I got tired of it."

He has not worked lately. His mother sent him to the employment office to see if he could collect unemployment. His downcast expression, his barely audible voice and the careless posture in which he sits in the folding metal chair seem to say that it is immaterial to him whether he collects unemployment or not. Nor does it matter how long he waits in the dreary room on the uncomfortable chair. He has, as he says, nothing better to do. As far as a job is concerned, "I'm not looking," he says.

At 18, he gives the impression of someone defeated by life. He has no self-confidence.

Eddie Green, a black graduate of Carver High School, sits next to Wilkerson, making light of his friend's shy responses. But Green himself has little reason for optimism. He is in the employment office because he was fired for talking too much at his job at a chicken processing factory.

In the three years since he completed high school, Green has worked as a brick layer, as a janitor and, finally, in the chicken plant. He, like Wilkerson, is applying for unemployment compensation, but he would like work, any work. "Tell you the truth, anything I can get ahold of," he said.

Across the big room, 21-year-old Valencia Thomas waits for an employment counselor. A black single mother of a two-year-old, she has been unemployed since she graduated from West End High School in 1987. No one at the school helped her find work. "I didn't get a job, period," she said. "That's why I'm up here."

While in school, she had a job for a while at a thrift store tagging clothes—a job she found through a newspaper advertisement. She did not like it and eventually quit, but now she would like any kind of work she could get. "It doesn't matter as long as I work," she said. It is her first visit to the employment office.

Jimmy Bridges, director of the Employment Service office, said his department tries to help clients like Wilkerson, Green, and Thomas. He directs many chronically unemployed teenagers to the local Job Corps office. The Job Corps—a federally funded residential program that brings city kids into a rural environment—helps more than 63,000 disadvantaged high school youth nationwide. The program provides basic skills, occupational training, and support services.

Unfortunately, the local state employment office does not have enough counselors to direct everyone who comes in to the proper agencies. Several years ago, the office had 10 job counselors, but recent budget cuts have reduced the number to two.

"We just really try to take it up on our own," Bridges said, noting that many of his clients—"the people who are going to be our future"—lack self-motivation, skills, and work habits.

The Schools and the Skills

Many young people in Birmingham find themselves unprepared for work. Some doubt that the state's schools are providing all students with the skills they need. Employers say they are looking for workers who can read and write. Armed with the basic skills, they can learn the job, they say.

"I'm not sure that, given all our talk about educational reform, we're all that much closer to producing a high school graduate that can read, write and think and speak," said Brad Moody, a professor of political science at Auburn University at Montgomery, who teaches a course in the politics of education.

While the state faces a problem with high school dropouts, it also faces a significant problem with graduates not equipped for the job market, Moody said. Many of these young people fill the lowest tier on the job market, working in fast-food restaurants.

In Alabama, 52 percent of the adult population has not completed high school, but a significant portion of this number can be accounted for by older rural blacks who had no opportunity to complete school. Yet, the dropout rate is still high. Just over 67 percent of the ninth graders who started high school in the 1985-86 school year finished with their class in 1989, according to state Department of Education statistics.

Teaching Job Skills

To improve job training in Birmingham, the city's high schools have begun to emphasize good work habits as part of the curriculum. Students are taught how to fill out a job application, how to dress for a job interview, and the importance of being at work on time.

At the new Minor High School, built in 1987, the vocational education teachers actively help students find work or placement in technical colleges. The curriculum is closely tied to job areas, though many of the boys in the program find that they need to go on to technical colleges to get hired by industry.

Cyndi Hood, 21, who graduated from Huffman High School in northeast Birmingham, got a job with Medical Center East as part of her high school's cooperative education program. Her first job out of school was as a secretary and accountant for a musical group. She now works for SouthTrust Bank in the consumer loan department. Not only did the school help her find a job, it has kept track. "They want me to stay employed," she said.

Low Esteem, Few Choices

Many young people in Birmingham realize that, without an education, they will not fare well in the job market. They leave school, they say, because it was not a nurturing place for them. They suffer from low self-esteem and few choices. Many return to school, however, or go into training programs sponsored by corporations and community, state and federal agencies, such as the Job Corps or Birmingham Urban League's general education diploma (GED) classes.

Those who teach the GED classes say that students gain confidence as they progress toward their diploma.

"The young people who start . . . do not think they have a future. They are down on their luck," said director Christine Alford, who directs the Urban League's Office System Training Program for inner-city youth whose families are living on less than 70 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. The project, which places 85 to 90 percent of graduates, is supported by funds from the federal Job Training Partnership Act and IBM. Training is half at the Urban League and half at the job.

Jeffrey Webb is enrolled in the GED classes, which are held in what was once a black movie theater. Webb left high school as a senior in 1989 but enrolled almost immediately in the program so that he could qualify to enlist in the Navy.

Built like a football player, Webb wears a suit and tie to his GED classes, an indication that he has understood the lessons taught in high school about how to impress personnel directors. He works at Andre's, a fast-food restaurant, and at Gus Meyer, an expensive women's clothing store in Brookwood Mall. He has also worked at McDonald's, a job he did not like. "They don't care about you; they just care about the job," he said.

Cassandra Harris, a single mother, enrolled in the Urban League's Office System program to get herself off public assistance.

"I decided since I had a hard time getting employment that I would come here," said Harris, who is studying word processing to get an office job.

The availability of training and the valuable job skills she is learning make her hopeful about the future. "I have more knowledge of word processing than ever before in my life," she said. "It's not easy living on welfare."

Like Harris, many young people can improve their self-image and their career possibilities if they get help from programs that provide basic and technical skills they did not receive in school.

Many young people in Birmingham realize that, without an education, they will not fare well in the job market. They leave school because it was not a nurturing place for them.



PHOTO BY AP/WIDEWORLD

With a large budget deficit and big-city social problems, Lawrence, Mass. is a worst-case scenario for the prospects for young people getting good jobs. At the same time, Lawrence can be considered a laboratory of the future. The U.S. will be able to learn something tangible from Lawrence's situation. Within the city's problems may lie answers to how America can revitalize itself.

CITY OF IMMIGRANTS:

YOUNG WORKERS IN A NEW ENGLAND FACTORY TOWN

By Catherine Foster

Yankee industrialists in the late 1840s took one look at the Merrimack River and decided the surrounding area would be a great place to build a town. They tamed the river and built cotton spinning mills, streets, housing and a public service infrastructure for the purpose of manufacturing textiles. They called their creation Lawrence. Then they went to Europe and recruited workers from more than 50 ethnic groups.

It's still known as "The Immigrant City." Only today, while Poles, Irish, French-Canadians, Russians, Lebanese and Greeks remain, the city has become approximately a third Hispanic, including large numbers of Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and some Cubans. All came for mill jobs. The only problem is, most of those jobs are gone.

Lawrence has an average per capita income of \$8,600, ranking 341 out of 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts. Lawrence's unemployment rate is 10 percent, up 45 percent from last year in a state where unemployment has remained steady at 6 percent.

Some experts say the state did little to stop the exodus of manufacturing jobs. "In the past, it's maintained an elitist attitude toward job creation; only those jobs needing someone with an advanced degree were created, rather than ones that immigrants could fill," says Ron Mills, spokesman for the Chamber of Commerce.

"The Bay State economy has changed," says Andy Hahn, associate dean of the Heller School at Brandeis University. "The fear of recession in Massachusetts, the number of layoffs, high-tech shrinking, all of that reverberates down to teens. It means stiffening competition for entry-level jobs; more spouses and older people are taking them. That displaces [younger workers]. Kids with no skills are at the end of the labor market queue."

Economic and Social Problems

The loss of jobs in Lawrence has forced city officials to deal with a \$6 million budget deficit. The city's financial problems have led school officials to cut back much-needed support programs, such as bilingual education, and threaten to close schools three months early this year.

State and federal support, which poured into the city immediately after a series of riots in 1984, has not been enough to alleviate growing social problems. The city has the highest teen pregnancy and infant mortality rates in the state, and one of the highest dropout rates. Drug use is high.

The underlying cause of the riots—friction between old and new immigrant groups (and anger at poor housing and lack of political voice)—remains a problem. While Lawrence has not passed a nonbinding referendum to make English the official language, as has been done in nearby Lowell, resistance to Hispanic newcomers and blacks is still palpable. The city is

faced with a difficult task. It must bring Hispanics—who now comprise 70 percent of the school population—into the mainstream, if Lawrence is to have a future.

"When the economy was good three or four years ago, employers were dipping down into 14- and 15-year-olds and raising wages. Now . . . if you're a young person with no skills, . . . you're really behind the eight-ball."

That the city is in trouble has not gone unnoticed elsewhere in the state. Greg Miller, chief executive officer of the International Institute, an advocacy and social service agency founded in Lawrence in 1913, is worried that the funding which flowed into the city after the riots will be cut since Lawrence is not making progress on problems like teen pregnancy.

"The state is frustrated," he says. "Who wants to pour money into a city where people can't come together?"

The poor economy also means few new jobs for young people at the clothing factories, shoe factories, fast-food restaurants,

Vital Signs

Population:	65,000
Racial Composition:	91% white 40% Hispanic 6% Asian 3% black
Unemployment Rate:	6% Massachusetts 10% Lawrence 24% 16-24 year olds, Lawrence
Per Capita Income:	\$14,389 Massachusetts 9,451 Lawrence
Percentage Who Complete High School:	40-50%
Percentage Going to College:	75%
Job Growth:	Transportation, utilities, wholesale trade, insurance, all services
Job Decline:	Manufacturing, nondurable goods, retail trade, commercial banks, automotive dealers



PHOTO BY JOHN NORDELL

and nursing homes in Lawrence.

"When the economy was good three or four years ago, employers were dipping down into 14- and 15-year-olds and raising wages," says Mike Lynch, employment director for the city's Department of Employment and Training. "Now that there's harder times, if you're economically disadvantaged, a young person with no skills, and with limited English, you're really behind the eight-ball."

High school graduates and job counselors say that with a poor job climate, more people are opting for hitting the streets. Only 300 of the 800 students who enter Lawrence High School graduate with their class. Of the graduates, many go on to nearby Northern Essex Community College, which has low fees, good financial aid, and a recruitment and training program for youth interested in health careers.

"Last year, fewer kids went to work," says Rose Flanagan, job placement counselor at the high school. "They had the opportunity to go to college. Whether or not they're still there is a good question." She says she doesn't have figures for what happens to the students after they leave high school because the budget for that was cut.

Higher Standards

Young workers say that—because of the tight job market—job entry requirements have been raised. In some cases, local industries have retooled and now demand higher skills. In others, a tight job market has enabled employers to be choosy. To young people, however, it feels like a closed door.

Michelle Jarbeau, 21, an unemployed single parent with two daughters, says finding work was much easier for her older

sisters. "My sister, Ann, she didn't have a high school diploma. She's been working at Raytheon for five years. Now they say they won't take anybody unless you have a diploma. And my sister, Connie, she works at an insurance agency. When she started, you didn't have to take a test. Now they have to see the diploma and you have to take some test. . . ."

"First it's a diploma, then five years later they'll want you to have a college degree," she says. "Next thing they'll want a diploma to do maintenance."

"My friend got a job last year without a diploma and they told him if he came two months later they wouldn't have hired him," said Edwin Espin, 21, a friend of Michelle's.

"In the days when workers were needed, I'd call them at home, buy them alarm clocks, get them drug treatment if I thought they'd be a long-term possibility." Now that the company's not hiring, "I don't feel that same push."

Edwin says he's tried to find work but has thus far been shut out. "There ain't no company out there that's gonna pay you nine bucks an hour with no education and no background."

"Before, people didn't really want to work," says Fred Col-lazo, 20. "Now they do, and there's, like, 10 people for 3 openings."

"It's terrible for these kids finding jobs. Those who get them are lucky," says Angel Aquasvivas, a bilingual education teacher at Lawrence High School.

Tony Sapienza, vice-president of Grieco Bros., a clothing manufacturer which makes suits for Brooks Brothers, said that because his company is not adding positions and is not in need of young labor to meet its contracts, he is not making the special efforts that he used to.

"In the days when workers were needed, I'd call them at home, buy them alarm clocks, get them drug treatment if I thought they'd be a long-term possibility," he said. Now that the company's not hiring, and in fact is laying off, "I don't feel that same push," he said.

Job turnover at the factory is high. Only about 30 of his 250 new employees each year last beyond three years.

Few Connections

Finding work is particularly difficult for the young Hispanics, who have few relatives established in town and no links to jobs.

Angel Aquasvivas, the Lawrence High bilingual education teacher, says that because schools and families do not have high expectations for young people and because there are so few job opportunities, many Hispanic youth lack any realistic sense of their possibilities.

"They lack a vision of the future." They "don't see what they're going to be," he says.

The real "connections" for many Hispanic youth are with their former island homes. With a week's pay lasting a month in the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico, families will go down for several weeks in the winter. Adults forfeit jobs and pull their children out of school.

"Young people are often the mainstay of the family," says Mike Sweeney, coordinator of the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council's Peer Leadership program. "It's expected that the young ones who are strong, who are 'only' in school, so to speak, will go back and help take care of [their grandparents]."

One result of this "island draw" is that adults never learn English well or truly settle in the community. They don't vote, and don't offer up candidates for local government. There are still no Hispanics on the school committee or city council. However, with a minority hiring rate of 22 percent, the city has made progress from the days when there were no minorities on the city's payroll.

Julio Padilla, 19, has been in the U.S. for two years, speaks limited English, and has no family help to find work. His father, who he doesn't live with, goes back and forth to the Dominican Republic. He lives with his sister, who's on welfare. His mother lives in Puerto Rico.

Pedro Ceballo, 19 and still in school, also has few connections. Right now he works part-time cleaning buildings and is looking for something that pays more money. What? He shrugs, "Anything." He would like to get training for some kind of job, but something that "wouldn't take time, like a few weeks."

But some youth from the established community are extremely confident that they can find jobs, in spite of the tight labor market.

Tom Brown, a student at Greater Lawrence Technical School, said that he was sure of finding work in a few months. Tom knows he is well-connected: his father owns a carpentry business, one uncle is a plumber, several others are in the car repair field. "If I can't get a job through them, I'll work for my cousin, who's a mason."

Dennis York, 23, descended from French-Irish-German-Iroquois stock and a family that can trace its roots back nine generations, says that he had an inside track into Grieco Bros., where he makes as much as \$10 an hour, chalking sleeves. York, a technical school graduate, got the job through a friend. "Probably the only way I could have gotten in this place," he says.

Limited Support

Young people confirm that they don't receive enough support from home or school. Limited alternatives and expectations lead some to self-destructive behavior.

"A lot of my old friends have gone down the tubes with drugs," says Joseph Nieves, 19, a floor boy at the Grieco Bros. clothing factory who dropped out of school because "my family needed the money."

"I used to hang around with a crowd. We had a lot of talent, you know. Some of us breakdanced, some of us did graffiti, we were really good. Now half are drug addicts. They got no talent, no money, no home."

Avilda Martinez, community relations coordinator of Lawrence Futures, part of the Annie Casey Foundation's project to improve middle schools, says that much of the problem comes from limited expectations at home and at school.

"In high school, nothing is expected. Just show up, is the message. A girl I know went to see a guidance counselor, who told her, 'The best you can do is secretarial school.' That happened to me, too. I was told, 'You're never going to be good enough.'"

"They don't get support at home; they don't get support in school," Martinez says.

"In the Dominican Republic, you *have* to study," says Arturo Munoz, 17, who has been in and out of school for 3 years. "The system is hard, it makes you study. If you don't, they don't want you in the school. Here, you're encouraged to study, and they just push you along through the grades if you don't."

John Picardo, a Sears automotive mechanic, says that the vocational high school he attended did little to prepare him for work.

"Sometimes the teachers don't sit down with you, like, you know the movie, 'Lean on Me'? That expressed the situation of what (teachers) should do for the kids. They should sit down with them and explain things. Other teachers, they just throw something on the black board. I ain't no Einstein. They just throw things up there. Does that get you prepared for a job?"

New Networks

Except for kids like Tom and Dennis from traditional blue-collar families, the old ways of getting hired, through friends and family connections, no longer work. These days, young people must rely increasingly on federal, state, and community

"The real value of any program is the advocacy it gives [disadvantaged youth] in finding jobs. . . . The parent or uncle or friend that most middle class kids have, these kids don't have. It takes the place of a networking advocate."

support programs that serve at-risk youth. Of particular importance are new programs that help dropouts obtain work readiness skills and equivalency diplomas and provide support for pregnant and parenting teens.

"The real value of any program is the advocacy it gives [disadvantaged youth] in finding jobs," says Joe Duggan, director of the Chamber of Commerce-sponsored Business-Education Collaborative, which brings 80 businesses, institutions of higher learning, and community based organizations together to work in partnership with Lawrence Public Schools. "The parent or uncle or friend that most middle class kids have, these kids don't have. It takes the place of a networking advocate."

Marilyn Vega dropped out in 9th grade when the family lived in Pennsylvania. After she had her son, she decided to return to school. A social worker discussed a range of programs available and directed her to the federally funded Entry Employment Experience Program (EEEP). It provides a combination of skills development, personal counseling, job preparation, GED preparation, and temporary job placement as well as help in looking for permanent jobs.

She was placed with the Women's Resource Center as an advocate in court for battered women. She is also part of a Peer Leadership Program in which she counsels people her own age out of her home about such issues as drugs, sex, AIDS, and self-esteem.

John Picardo, 21, a Sears automotive mechanic, got his job through a vocational school's cooperative-education program.

"I worked one week, then went to school one week." He's been working since he was 14 and wants to own his own car repair shop.

Edwin Espin, 18, found his job through EEEP. His temporary job is with City Hall as a filing clerk in Inspectional Services.

Miray Ramy, 17, senior class president at Lawrence High, is well established in the community. Her family came over from Lebanon 12 years ago to join other family members who were working in the factories. But while she relied on her family to set high expectations and provide guidance, she found her job as a dental assistant through a job counselor.

Unfortunately, many job training programs are poorly funded. Project Entry, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, identified floundering kids who might not graduate and gave them pre-employment orientation, interviewing techniques, work maturity skills, and other job training. Participating employers gave students trial employment. The program paid their wages through federal Job Training Partnership Act funds. Unfortunately, like many other programs to help young people, Project Entry was always having its funding cut. It was halted in 1985 at a time when Burger King was paying premium wages to attract workers and it didn't seem needed. Now that it is again needed, funding is even more uncertain.

No Guarantees

Many of the job counselors interviewed described their frustration in helping prepare young people for work, only to find that there are no jobs at the end of the process.

Mike Sweeney, the Peer Leadership Program coordinator, says he is not sure that he can find permanent jobs for even his most capable clients.

One of his clients, Marilyn Vega, put her son into day care and has worked hard in the program, getting glowing reports. "She has all the training, commitment, and desire to make an excellent human services social worker. But to be honest with you, I don't know if I'm going to be able to get her a job.

"She's 21 years old and has done what society has told her she has to do to succeed. What's going to happen to the psychology of this young lady that after having done these things, having turned her life around against all kinds of odds, she can't get a job?

"It's going to be discouraging to her, to teenagers who aren't involved in this program, and to teenagers who are," he says.

"My sister, Ann, she didn't have a high school diploma. She's been working at Raytheon for five years. Now they say they won't take anybody unless you have a diploma. And my sister, Connie, she works at an insurance agency. When she started, you didn't have to take a test. Now they have to see the diploma and you have to take some test. . . ."



PHOTO BY DENNIS McDONALD

The farm crisis of the mid-1980s devastated farmers and small towns throughout the nation. The sting of closed meat packing plants, equipment manufacturers and dealerships, lumberyards and other agriculturally based industries is still being felt in America's heartland, causing an exodus of jobs and young people. For those who remain in Iowa and joined the work force without going on to college, the situation has provided some opportunities, but more often it has resulted in disappointment.

YOUTH SEEK WORK IN IOWA'S HEARTLAND

By Dennis McDonald

Upon entering Estherville Foods, an egg processing plant that is this town's major employer, the first thing a visitor notices is the aroma. Not entirely unpleasant, it is a farmlike odor, but more acrid. Paul Bryant, 22, says the aroma comes from the cleansers used to sanitize eggs before they are processed (pasteurized and packaged in liquid or dehydrated form). He says the fumes are even worse in some areas of the plant, and they aggravate his respiratory problems.

Residents of Estherville, a town of 6,000 located in the northwest corner of the state, call the egg plant "The Pit." But for young workers like Paul Bryant with no more than a high school education, the job is at least something to go on. The place employs between 100 and 180, depending upon the influx of eggs. That's big time for Estherville, which in 1985 saw its 900-worker John Morrell meat packing plant shut down. Estherville has been able to add only about 100 new jobs since the loss of Morrell.

The meat packing plant's closing has hurt the entire community, but according to Mayor Lyle Hevern, unskilled young people have been hit the hardest. "We have too many unemployed people with work experience. . . . We probably have the best educated garbage men in America."

In addition to filling the town's garbage crew, those college-educated managers and other former Morrell workers who haven't fled the region have snapped up nearly every high-paying position in town, taking the very jobs which in the past had been a first-time worker's best hope for experiencing the economic rewards of hard work.

Low Wages, Few Benefits

What's left to new workers is "the Pit," a place which for all of its unsavory reputation, at least affords inexperienced young workers an opportunity to earn slightly more than minimum wage. Unfortunately, it offers no more than that.

After two years at the egg plant, Paul Bryant still earns less than five dollars an hour and receives no health or retirement benefits. His current salary is less than half that of his father, a trailer court maintenance worker, and about the same as his mother, a nursing home attendant.

Thus far, Paul has been unable to save any of his earnings. He would like to set aside part of his paycheck to attend a vocational school in design engineering. He was a good student in high school and is inventive, according to his parents, but the amount of his weekly check is undependable. He works anywhere from 30 to 55 hours a week, and his checks are consumed by child-support payments, rent, food, car payments, and medical bills.

"No complaints," Paul says one evening, as he stops at his parents' trailer house for supper before heading home to the rented house where he lives with his girlfriend. "The work's

not bad. In fact, I even enjoy it those times when I'm not stuck in one place and get to walk the floor, filling in where needed."

"He shouldn't even be working there—with his asthma," his mother laments.

Paul's parents are frustrated that their son has to work "beneath his abilities," but they concede that he's learning how

"... someone has to stay here. I'd hate to think that all of these little towns are just going to die."

to make an honest living and be responsible for himself. His father wishes Paul were in vocational school now, like his two older brothers, but he is not concerned about Paul's future. "He knows how to work. None of my boys are afraid of work. He'll make it all right, one way or another."

Vital Signs

Population:	2.9 million Iowa 6,000 Estherville 350 Terril 2,000 Milford
Racial Composition:	96% white 1% Hispanic 2% black 1% other
Unemployment Rate:	4.2% total population 6.5% 16-19-year-olds 7.2% 20-24-year-olds
Per Capita Income:	\$11,198 Iowa
Percentage Who Complete High School:	97% Iowa
Percentage Going to College:	64% Iowa
Job Growth:	Service-related jobs (retail sales—grocery, bargain store, convenience store), janitorial, health care fields, construction, telemarketing
Job Decline:	Seasonal farming, clerical, meat packing



PHOTO BY DENNIS McDONALD

While job prospects for young people like Paul are limited by the large pool of college-educated and other experienced workers, they are also hindered by employer concern about the "flightiness" of the region's youth.

Bruce Ratdke, director of Estherville's Good Samaritan nursing home, says he has had bad luck with young workers. "In recent years I've found they're unreliable," notes Ratdke. "Here today, gone tomorrow. Even the high school kids are better, but once they graduate, they seem to disintegrate. Outside activities take priority over work."

Good Samaritan offers scholarships for new workers who need to gain the accreditation necessary to continue working in the health profession, "but it's always the older workers who take advantage of the scholarships."

Many local employers agree. A hardware store owner says he is better off training college bound students even though he knows he'll eventually lose them. "They end up staying here about as long as the others anyway, and while they're here, they're earning their pay."

"My friends have all left, for school or work," Paul Bryant says, aware of only one other high school classmate still living in Estherville—a fellow worker at the egg plant.

Helen Metzger, a high-school senior, is an example of someone who plans to leave immediately upon graduation. "I'm moving to Wyoming or Colorado to work on a dude ranch," she says.

Ms. Metzger works in the deli of a grocery store through the local high school's co-op program, which allows seniors to take

time from school, working for pay and credit. That program has been in place for more than a decade and has helped hundreds of young people get a foot in the door of local businesses.

However, recent economic constraints have limited the co-op program's effectiveness as well. Not long ago, four staff members supervised the co-op. Today, only one staff member serves as supervisor.

Support for Single Mothers

A good portion of the young workers who stay in town are single mothers wanting to be near family, community, and government support. Emmet County, Iowa, has nearly twice as many recipients of WIC coupons as an adjoining county, even though that county has a larger population.

Rhonda Sites, 22, has worked at and quit a number of jobs, including the egg plant. "It gave my lungs fits, I was coughing all the time." At present, she is not looking for work. She wants to stay with her two children and earn her general education diploma (GED) so she can go on to vocational school and become a secretary.

"I'm tired of living the way I do, doing without everything," Ms. Sites says. She has set June as her goal for attaining a GED.

Linda Origer, 22, received above average grades in high school and earned her diploma. She planned on college but chose to stay in town to help her widowed and partially paralyzed mother. Linda has been able to do little more than survive day-to-day working in restaurants and convenience stores.

Currently, she is the co-manager of a convenience store where she works about 30 hours a week for \$3.65 an hour. She lives with her boyfriend and his two children in a faded and untended house, typical of the houses that now characterize block after block of Estherville's residential districts.

Increased Emphasis on College

The shortage of good-paying jobs for high school graduates in rural Iowa also has contributed to increased postsecondary school enrollment. Estherville High School guidance counselor Phil Johnson reports that close to 70 percent of graduates attend postsecondary school, and another 10 percent enter the military.

That trend is evident throughout the state. Since 1980, full-time postsecondary enrollment in Iowa increased by more than 10 percent and the number of part-time postsecondary students increased by more than 25 percent, even though the number of K-12 students has decreased considerably.

In Iowa, rural leaders view their strong educational systems and well-educated youth as a major selling point in attracting new industries. In Estherville, Mayor Hevern believes the town is showing small but noticeable signs of revival.

However, Mr. Hevern readily acknowledges that most of the widely acclaimed revival in rural states is occurring in their metropolitan areas.

"Ten thousand new jobs created," he shouts suddenly, displaying the headline of an industrial development newsletter. "It's unbelievable, a miracle! But that's in Des Moines (Iowa's largest city and capital)."

Luck and Circumstance

Iowa's rural towns are in the same boat as Estherville. Only 21 of Iowa's 99 county seat towns showed population growth during the 1980's. Those that did experience growth often found that their progress could be credited to luck and circumstance as much as the effects of newly established industrial development boards.

For example, in Milford, a town of just over 2,000 only 20 miles from Estherville, growth has been slow but steady throughout its history. Like Estherville, Milford has offered tax breaks and other financial incentives to new and existing industries. But Mayor Dorothy Frederick concedes that the town's success is largely influenced by its proximity to a summer tourist area and a well-travelled main street highway.

During the past two years, Milford has lured several new small businesses; but the town's mainstay is Style Craft, a furniture factory employing 600.

Style Craft president Bob Reed admits the plant's incredible expansion since it opened in the early 1960's has been at least in part a matter of good luck.

"When we opened this plant, we had no idea that years down the line we would be able to protect ourselves from third-world labor incursions. That's simply because our product is too bulky to make it profitable to manufacture in another country and then pay the high cost of shipping."

But Mr. Reed also credits the company's success to the region's well-educated labor pool.

"We have a lot of competition from the southern United States, places with a long history of upholstery and seamstress work. But this region has its advantages. The labor force is well-educated, hardworking, and has a good mechanical aptitude."

Style Craft rewards its employees with good salaries. Mike Lamb, 20, estimates that he will earn close to \$20,000 in his second year as a furniture framer. Fifteen-percent of the company's labor force is 24 years old and under. Some are college graduates who have found they can earn more with factory work than in professional positions.

Strong Work Ethic

The work at Style Craft is labor intensive and it requires enough skill to be classified as a craft, according to personnel director Paula Zenor. She says it's highly unlikely the workers will be replaced by machines. Workers are paid on a quota system, and Zenor says many of them run to the break room and back for snacks so they can maintain their productivity.

Despite the pace, Mike Lamb terms the work situation "friendly." He anticipates working there for a long time. He currently lives with his parents but plans to marry in the fall and buy a home.

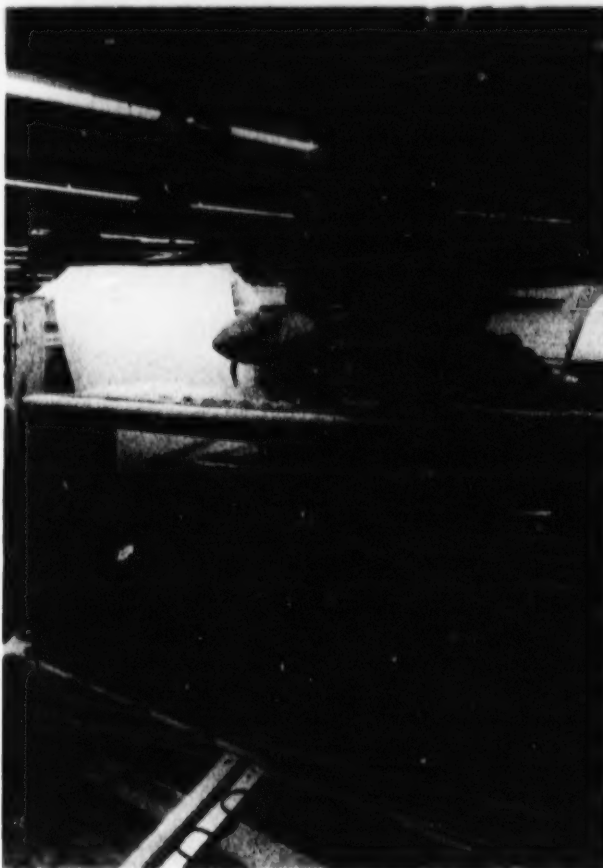


PHOTO BY DENNIS McDONALD

"... I want to do my best. After all, my number is on my work and if it's bad, it'll come back to me."

Like many youth in rural America, Mike's work ethic was strongly shaped by his parents. His father, Don, says it is harder to get started now than when he was young, and yet, Don fears that today's youth are spoiled.

"When they take a job they want to know how many hours they'll have to work. They travel, do things we had to work years to do. When I got started I didn't ask how much time I could have off. I asked how many hours I could work."

Don started as a route delivery man for a milk company. "I worked ungodly hours to build up my route, then I got promoted and the guy who took my place didn't want to work that hard. The route went downhill and I got blamed because I was the manager. So who knows whether it's worth it or not."

Today, Don is an insurance and real estate salesman and he owns a new home. Mike says he was heavily influenced by his dad. "He always stressed, work hard and good things will happen. I think that's true. Maybe he and mom didn't always say it, but we could see it. When I'm working at the factory, I think about that. I want to do my best. After all, my number is on my work and if it's bad, it'll come back to me."

Mayor Frederick is convinced that the Midwestern work ethic remains intact. She believes that rural towns can continue to flourish, even though they have little hope of keeping their top students.



PHOTO BY DENNIS McDONALD

"We're going to lose our 'A' students, there's no doubt about that. After they go to college they can't afford to come back. But we've got to make sure we create opportunities for the 'B' and 'C' students."

"There are people in business here today who started out as simple laborers and worked their way up. I know it's a lot harder today for people without college educations, but I'm convinced the opportunity still exists. I know that it can still be done."

Seizing the Opportunity

Sam Wingert, 23, is an example of someone who has found a way to succeed without additional education. Sam began working as a dishwasher in restaurants when he was a freshman in high school. By the time he was a senior, he was assistant chef at a highly regarded tourist dining spot. When that place changed owners, he moved on to a newly opened German restaurant as head chef and then became head chef and kitchen manager of a fine dining spot in a Northwest Iowa college town. His goal is to operate his own restaurant. "I'm working 16 hours a day for someone else, and I realize I should be doing that for myself."

Sam has developed his own management theories. He believes food portions and appropriate prices, decor, presentation, and service are all important. But Sam argues that the key to a successful business is the employees: "The workers are the product," he says. "You can buy the best quality food, prepare it just right, present it and serve it exquisitely, and even make a lot of money; but none of that is worth a damn if your workers aren't happy. You've got to get down in the grease pits with them, let them know you care; when you do that, everything else will take care of itself."

Like Sam Wingert, other of Iowa's high school educated youth are determined to seize the opportunity and work on their own without further education. Despite the slim chances of success, some of those youth are becoming involved in family farming operations.

Return to the Land

Three miles west of of Milford, Ron Holle, 24, is farming about 300 acres with his father. On the few small family farms, like the Holle's, that remain in the region, some parents are bringing one of their children into the business, but generally only single children. The margin of profit cannot support another family.

The trend today is toward bigger farms. But where those farms can support multiple families, their methods of operation have become so complex that the operators are likely to be college graduates.

In 1950, Iowa contained more than 200,000 farms. Today, there are just over 100,000. One rural leader recently predicted that by the year 2000 the entire state of Iowa will be divided into only 16,000 farms.

Still, Ron's father, Ray, believes his son can survive as a farmer. "I think these kids can make it if they don't get themselves into debt."

Ron was offered a scholarship to play basketball at Westmar College in LeMars, Iowa, but decided to farm instead. "I've never questioned that decision," he said. "I love the work, I'm my own boss. It's long hours but nobody's telling me what to do."

For every Ron Holle, there are numerous Brent Mortensons sprinkled throughout rural America, youth who would like to be farming but who have been forced to pursue a different path.

Brent and his wife Ronda, both 21, live with their firstborn, Sadie, in a two-story house on the north edge of Terril, Iowa. Terril is located midway between Milford and Estherville. It

"I don't mean to sound like I'm against progress or anything like that, but I would just like to know where we're going in such a helluva hurry."

has a population of about 350, and not so long ago stood as a nearly stereotypical example of small town serenity and stability.

But Terril is an endangered species. The town's population—about 350—has dropped nearly 20 percent since 1980. Only a handful of businesses remain open along its mostly abandoned main street. The town's mayor, elected last fall, moved his family to Ohio for a better paying job only two weeks after he was sworn into office. The local K-12 school, still the pride of the community, faces dwindling enrollment. In light of additional recent state requirements, the school is likely to shut down or revert to a K-8 school in the near future.

Even so, Brent and Ronda chose to live here.

Although most people their age have left the area, and despite the fact that they must commute 20 miles for jobs and most shopping and entertainment, they prefer living near their families and a small, close-knit group of friends.

"There isn't a lot available in Terril," Ronda says, "but someone has to stay here. I'd hate to think that all of these little towns are just going to die."

Shortly after they were married, the Mortensons confronted the possibility of having to move to another region to insure adequate income. Brent was in the third of a string of laboring jobs, none of which paid much more than minimum wage, and Ronda had graduated from a cosmetology school 60 miles to the south and was seeking steady work as a hair-stylist.

"Back then, we were just getting by. Every now and then we'd break down and treat ourselves, maybe go out for a pizza or a movie, knowing that we only had about \$20 in our checking account," she said. "But things have always seemed to work out for us."

Eventually, Ronda found a job in a stylist shop in a seasonal tourist area. The job guaranteed only \$120/week, but last summer, Ronda said she made up to \$300 a week. She left the job in December, during the eighth month of her pregnancy.

On-the-Job Training

About a year ago, Brent started working at a metal parts manufacturing factory. Recently, he was promoted and began training to operate a computerized lathe, a position paying over \$8 an hour.

Brent, who was raised on a nearby farm, learned to work with his hands at an early age. In high school, he was an above average student but preferred vocational courses. He is

undaunted by the onset of computerized equipment and is confident that he will eventually become proficient with the computerized lathe. He appreciates the company's training methods.

"You can start there without any experience, and as you get seniority they'll train you on the job for better positions. It's always been easier for me to learn that way, hands on, knowing the guy who's training me. They're also pretty good about offering self-improvement courses for employees and things like that."

Down the line, Brent believes experience with computerized equipment, particularly the programming of that equipment, could result in a \$30-\$40,000 a year job.

"In a city," Ronda points out.

"That's true," Brent acknowledges, "we'd probably have to move."

Brent and Ronda agree that money isn't the important thing in life. They just want enough to send their kids to college and for retirement. "In the long run, it's not money that makes you happy," Brent says. "Being close to your friends and family is a lot more important."

No More Acres

Although the Mortensons are content with their life and have an optimistic view of the future, both admit they would prefer to be farming or to at least be living on an acreage where they could raise livestock.

"When you grow up on a farm, it gets in your blood," Brent says. In his spare time, he helps on his parent's farm, "just because I enjoy it, I don't expect any pay."

Brent Mortenson's father, 57, recalls that when he was

"Nothing ever comes easy. Getting started in anything has never been easy. You have to earn it. Some people say they've had good luck or bad luck, but the way I figure it, there's no such thing as luck, it's just life."

young, he worked as a hired man for a number of years and saved enough money to begin farming on his own.

"I started on a shoestring, but it's tougher now."

"It really isn't right," Brent says, "you've got a few guys with thousands of acres while a lot of people would like to have just a part of that."

Nonetheless, Brent voices no bitterness about the changes in rural America. "Nothing ever comes easy. Getting started in anything has never been easy. You have to earn it. Some people say they've had good luck or bad luck, but the way I figure it, there's no such thing as luck, it's just life, sometimes it's good to you and sometimes it's not."

Brent's father is far less philosophical. "I don't mean to sound like I'm against progress or anything like that, but I would just like to know where we're going in such a helluva hurry. It'd be another story if these kids could get a decent job, but about all you can find around here is minimum wage, and I don't know how anybody is going to make it on that."



PHOTO COURTESY OF FORD MOTOR COMPANY INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW

The auto industry is going hi-tech, and it wants workers who have higher skills. But in a city where the middle class and business have fled the urban core, and where patterns of drug abuse, welfare dependency, and delinquency have replaced traditional values, young people need support and jobs. Now the Motor City—like many cities nationwide—is preparing to move again. It is pinning its revitalization plans on long-term efforts to retool its schools.

DETROIT'S YOUTH:

HIGHER SKILLS REQUIRED FOR HIGH-TECH AUTO INDUSTRY

By Patricia Montemurri

Juan Thompson—graduate of Detroit Cady High School, basement drummer, one-time pizza delivery driver and would-be big-time rap music maestro—was surrounded by the fruition and the future of Michigan's automotive industry.

Around him were space-age vehicular prototypes: iridescent-hued cars with high-performance promises touted by sleek, sequined showgirls. The world of wheels at the annual North American International Auto Show, staged earlier in the year in downtown Detroit, was highly high-tech and, in some cases, even affordable.

Thompson's job, in this glittery display of Motor City muscle, was to vacuum.

For \$5 an hour, 20-year-old Thompson pushed a vacuum cleaner along 600,000-square feet of carpeted convention hall, whirling away the footsteps of more than 658,000 people who attended the 10-day show.

Thompson once dreamed of being a horse jockey. His father used to train horses at Detroit-area race tracks. But growth hormones precluded that dream coming true.

"I'm too tall to do that," sighed Thompson, 5'11 and an extra inch added to his frame by the L.A. Raiders cap atop his head. Now his goal is to be a rap musician. To support himself until one of his demo tapes goes gold, he works on-and-off for a cleaning company and he contemplates joining the Navy.

Assembly Line Blues

"It's not like I can get a good job here anymore," he said. "It's not like I can get a job on the auto line building these cars anymore."

Long gone are the days when Michigan's economy easily absorbed foreign immigrants and one-time farmers and field-hands from the South, and put them all to work on a chugging automotive assembly line. A list of the occupations with the largest decline in Michigan includes many of the jobs that helped the auto industry propel several generations into the middle-class, giving them their own homes, two cars in the garage, and maybe a vacation cottage up north and college educations for the kids.

The number of people who still have auto assembly line jobs in Detroit and Michigan and America these days just keeps getting smaller.

Employment in the auto industry nationally will drop from 856,000 workers to 786,000 by the year 2000, according to projections from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. Michigan went from about 1.1 million manufacturing jobs in 1974 to 946,000 manufacturing jobs today. The number of Michigan automotive jobs in the manufacturing field dropped from 366,000 in 1974 to about 290,000 now.

In the Detroit-area alone, economists predict a loss of about 25,000 auto jobs during the 1990s.

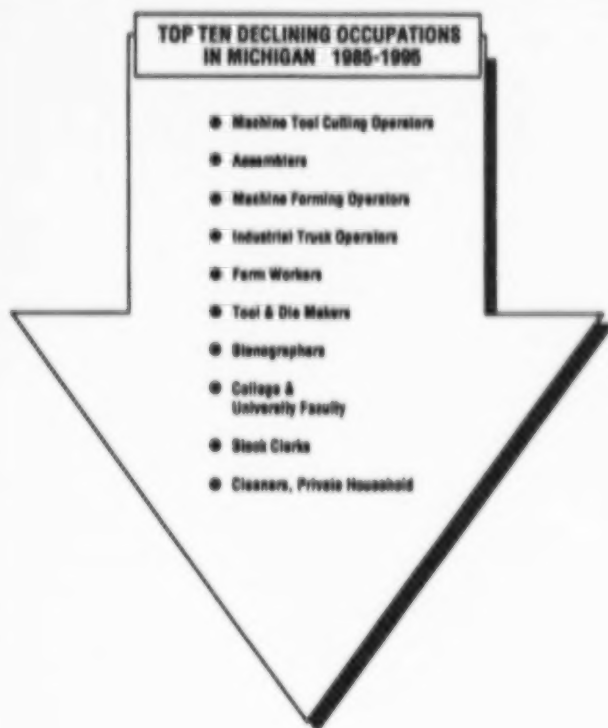
"When there are openings, the workers come from the ranks of the laid-off. And now the industry is concentrating on retraining those whose jobs have disappeared."

"There will still be some demand for people to fill unskilled jobs, but they're not going to pay what these young kids are expecting. . . particularly with the fact that the auto industries are not providing the jobs at the level they have been," says David Sanders, who directs the Metropolitan Affairs Corp., a division of the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments.

"From the standpoint of a [young worker], there's not a lot

Vital Signs

Population:	1 million
Racial Composition:	70% black 30% white
Unemployment Rate:	7.2% total population, 25 + 42.6% 16-19 year-olds 23.6% 20-24 year-olds
Per Capita Income:	\$11,993 Michigan 9,662 Detroit
Percentage Who Complete High School:	74% Michigan 40-50% Detroit
Percentage Going to College:	52% Michigan 55% Detroit
Job Growth:	Business services, health services, restaurants, social services, educational services, retail
Job Decline:	Machine tool cutting operators, assemblers



of activity there and [the job market is] practically dried up because of the layoffs and the total decline in our work force," said Ford Motor Company spokesman Dick Routh. Ford has lost 120,000 of its 275,000 assembly workers since 1978. Fewer than 1,000 people nationwide were hired last year for hourly-paid jobs, Routh said.

The loss of jobs in the auto industry mirrors declines in other businesses in Detroit that has led 800,000 to leave town since the 1950s. Detroit's population at its peak was 1.8 million but now hovers near the 1 million mark. Among its residents, about 70 percent are black and 30 percent are white.

Last year, a team of *Detroit Free Press* reporters drove every street in Detroit and reported that the city is home to 15,215 vacant buildings—enough to house a small city—and nearly half of them stand open to children, vagrants, arsonists, and drug addicts. Vacant and abandoned structures—storefronts, churches, hotels, bowling alleys and schools, but mostly homes—blot nearly every neighborhood and every major thoroughfare.

The abandonment is cruel testimony to the two-decade exodus of middle-class families from Detroit. The abandonment is both a cause and a result of the economic decay that has crippled Detroit neighborhoods.

The exodus stemmed from many factors, among them white flight to the suburbs, an old housing stock, a botched 1970s federal program to save housing, and a long-running school desegregation case, which resulted in court-ordered busing beginning in the late 1970s.

The loss of businesses is almost as severe as the population decline. In 1970, the city processed 11,684 corporate income tax forms. By 1987, the number of such filings had dropped to 8,066, according to the Detroit-based Citizens Research Council.

Perhaps more telling is the decline in small business partnerships in Detroit. That is where the most job growth has occurred nationwide, according to Citizens Research Council statisticians. Yet a look at Detroit municipal income tax returns for small business partnerships shows a 63 percent drop, from 4,258 in 1970 to 1,587 in 1987.

Youth Unemployment

With fewer businesses and a retooling industrial base that has laid off workers, young people must compete with adult workers with 10 to 20 years of seniority.

"There are virtually no openings in the auto industry," says UAW spokesman Karl Mantyla. "When there are openings, the workers come from the ranks of the laid-off. And now the industry is concentrating on retraining those whose jobs have disappeared."

Nearly 10,000 workers have used the UAW-Ford Re-Employment Assistance Centers, with nearly 80 percent placed in jobs, the union says. Through the UAW-General Motors Human Resource Center, nearly 20,000 laid-off workers have received either job placement or re-training services, including 3,000 who found new jobs in 1988.

The effort to place adult workers in jobs has contributed to youth unemployment—about 43 percent for teenagers and 24 percent for 20-24-year-olds.

As in most large cities, unemployment hits inner-city blacks particularly hard. While there are jobs aplenty in Detroit's far-flung suburbs, the Motor City has no subway or mass transit system, beyond buses, to transport a vehicle-less Detroit to the suburbs.

About half of Detroit's black teenagers are out of work. They are three times as likely as whites the same age to be without a job.

New Jobs

The promise of new jobs will help some young people—but only those with advanced training and education.

"The remaining entry-level jobs mostly will be part-time and we hire people with the full expectation that many of the employees will be attending school to improve their job and educational skills."

In Michigan, and across America, jobs will grow in the service sector, in the health industries, in sales, in the food industry. The service sector will increase from a projected 775,000 next year to 920,000 by the year 2000 in the seven-county Detroit area. There will be more demand for food handlers, waiters and waitresses, but there will be steadier and more

high-paying jobs in nursing, the health fields, and computer programming.

This is what the sign says on 24-year-old Jeanette Chandler's desk in a midtown Detroit office building.

"Henry Ford Hospital Employment Center
will accept applications for qualified persons
in the following areas only."

And then it lists those areas:

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist
Licensed Practical Nurse
Registered Nurse
Laboratory Technician
Pharmacist
Radiologic Technologist
Respiratory Therapist
Coding Abstract Analyst
Medical Secretaries
Unit Clerk (Must have taken specific unit clerk training course)

To all those who wander in asking for jobs in janitorial services, in the hospital cafeteria, as valet drivers for the hospital's parking service and even entry-level receptionist jobs just like hers, Jeanette Chandler simply says, "I'm sorry. We're not hiring in those areas."

Chandler, a single mother of two, earns \$6.43 an hour (about \$13,500 a year) plus health benefits. She knows that she will need more education if she is to get the job she wants. She hopes to become a personnel and employee relations specialist.

"I feel like I can really advance here once I get the school," she said. "I wanted to go to school after graduation. I wanted to go to college, but because of the kids and needing more money, I just never got a chance to do that," she said.

Between 70 to 80 percent of the 1,000 new jobs that open up each year at Henry Ford Health Systems will require training beyond the high school level, says Gary Severn, the hospital's director of community relations.

"The remaining entry-level jobs mostly will be part-time and we hire people with the full expectation that many of the employees will be attending school to improve their job and educational skills," said Severn. The hospital system, which employs 17,000 workers throughout southeastern Michigan, will reimburse up to \$1,000 annually for any higher education classes taken by full-time employees.

Educated Ditch Diggers

Even jobs such as digging ditches for the power company, which once anyone could do, will demand higher level skills, notes James Vollman, executive director of the Detroit Compact, a broad-based agreement between business and the public schools to improve the quality of education.

"Now you can't dig a ditch without being computer literate because you get your orders from a computer in your truck," Vollman said.

While auto mechanics once only needed to have taken high school vocational education classes, General Motors now requires its Mr. and Ms. Goodwrenches to have a two-year associates degree, noted John Choulochas, national college coordinator for the General Motors service technology group.

"The days are gone forever when you didn't have to graduate from high school before you went down to Dodge or Ford or GM and got a job," said Jesse Sandifer, a 47-year-old pipefitter for the Chrysler Corp. "We were fortunate enough to be the last of a dying breed. Now you must have an education in order to succeed in life."

Three weeks after the Auto Show shut down for another year, Chrysler closed the landmark auto factory where Sandifer works, the Jefferson Avenue Assembly plant. About 1,700 workers were laid off, and only 1,100 will be called back in 1992 when the company opens a state-of-the-art facility nearby. With more machines and a new management plan, the company believes it will increase productivity with fewer workers.

'Most Harrowing Nightmare'

With rising skill levels required, the automakers, like other corporations around the country, are concerned that there is an inadequate labor supply to fill their manpower needs.



PHOTO BY PATRICIA MONTAGNIERI

Last fall, Chrysler vice-chairman Gerald Greenwald told a group of minority suppliers that "Chrysler's most harrowing, private nightmare" will be finding people capable of running the sophisticated new assembly plant being built in Detroit.

Chrysler officials say that the company spends \$120 million a year training its work force, and at least ten percent of that goes to teach employees basic literacy skills. Nationally, the American Society for Training and Development says that employers invest 0.8 percent of a \$30 billion training budget, or \$250 million on remedial skills.

Chrysler had its training materials geared to people with 9th- and 10th-grade reading levels. But they had to be rewritten to accommodate employees, many of whom were reading at only a 6th-grade level.

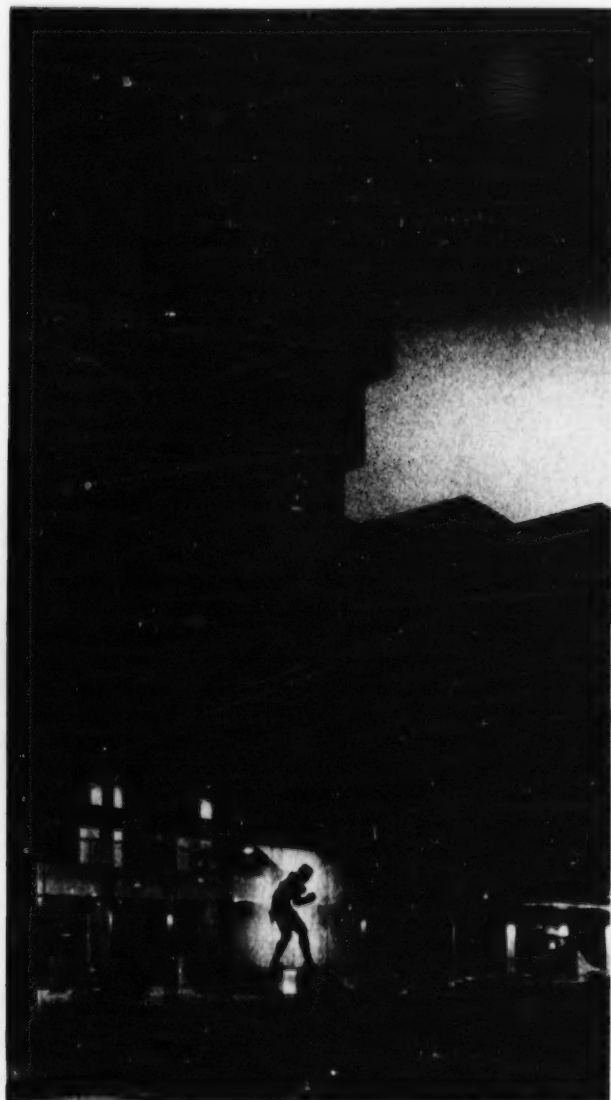


PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW

Unprepared Workers

Many trace the problems on the shop floor to the schoolroom.

Only 25 percent of the 7,000 seniors graduated from the Detroit public high schools were reading at grade level. Of the graduates, more than 3,000 went on to some form of higher education, school officials say. In recent years, about 2,800 students took the college entrance ACT exams, but slightly more than 500 scored at the national median of 19 or better on the ACT tests. And the bulk of those students came from Detroit's two elite, competitive-entrance high schools.

Employers are looking for workers who maintain a good attendance record in school, are reading at an 11th grade reading level, and are average or above average students with no major discipline problems. But "relatively few kids meet those standards right now," according to Vollman, the director of the Detroit Compact. The program guarantees students jobs with Detroit area companies after graduation from high school, or college scholarships, if they meet job-readiness and academic performance criteria.

Vollman estimates that the number of kids who meet the basic expectations of business "is probably under 10 percent of the graduating seniors. In the suburbs, it doesn't cross 50 percent."

But other observers say that young people today are performing better than could be expected under the circumstances. They point to a variety of social factors that make learning difficult.

"Much of what has happened has to do with what's happening in society today, the breakdown in strong families, the drug culture and the welfare culture," said Helen Moore, a longtime Detroit schools activist and founder of Black Parents for Quality Education. She says institutional racism has also thwarted Detroit's schoolchildren.

"I think when the school system became predominantly black, many who provided services just stopped teaching or didn't take much care," said Moore. "It hasn't meant that the black children are not as capable. It means services and opportunities weren't provided as they did at one time."

The school system, she said, "can't do anything but go up. The bottom fell out and we'll just have to rebuild from here on up."

John Elliott, president of the Detroit Federation of Teachers union, said the school system abetted the decline.

"We started to let slip standards for behavior, attendance, and achievement," said Elliott. "It seems to me then we started to develop this feeling that we had to move kids on, that we could damage their self-esteem by failing them. Somewhere along the line, and I include teachers and administrators as much as parents, we lost the standard that a youngster had to work to achieve."

Reviving the Schools

Now the Detroit Public Schools are immersed in a highly publicized effort to reverse the downturn. In 1989, the Detroit School Board eased out its superintendent of 13 years, Arthur Jefferson, to usher in a former university president and state schools superintendent, John W. Porter.

Porter is touting a Quality Education Plan, a 16-pronged attack on the district's chronic problems of lackluster achieve-

ment, poor attendance, and the high dropout rate. Pending school board approval, it will be implemented next fall.

The tentative plan stresses giving individual school principals and staff greater decision-making opportunities. Empowerment would offer a 25-percent pay increase to principals who agree to accept more responsibility at their schools, and would fire them after three years if student achievement falls below standard.

The new program calls for introducing interventions at every stage of development to help keep students from dropping out of school. The plan includes expanded pre-school programs and seeks to establish a mentoring project to match third-, fourth-, and fifth graders with community volunteers. It will establish ninth-grade alternative schools to help students with academic and minor discipline problems. One Detroit middle school may house a pilot program, where students receive special counseling and individual attention from teachers on call 24 hours a day.

It will be several years before it is effective, and will begin in a small number of schools.

"We're positioning the system for the long haul," says Detroit Schools Superintendent John W. Porter.

"It takes a long-time to end an academic deficit that began in third grade or a behavior pattern that was okay for ten years," said Vollman, the Detroit Compact's director.

Social Costs

In addition to those students who graduate with low skills, more than 40 percent of Detroit's students—or 6,000 young people a year—drop out before completing high school. Besides the obvious waste of talent and loss of earnings to the individual, high dropout rates are of concern because they are linked with social problems such as teen pregnancy, crime, and welfare dependency, which cost society billions of dollars.

"There are only three opportunities for our kids who don't have saleable skills," said Thomas Steel, assistant Detroit Schools superintendent in charge of dropout prevention and student support services.

"They can become part of the dependency economy, just go on welfare. Or they can find just a simple job that pays minimum salaries with very little opportunities for moving up. Or they can join the underground economy, the criminal economy," said Steel.

Joseph Radelet is the associate director of Metropolitan Detroit Youth Foundation, a non-profit United Way agency which provides job training services and educational support services for about 2,000 young people yearly.

"I think that expectations are generally very high. Like all of us, they want rewards very quickly. That's why the lure of drugs is very strong. . . . Also remaining on welfare is a disincentive to joining job training.

Going on welfare, said Radelet, is better, in most cases, than taking a minimum-wage job, especially if the job doesn't have benefits.

"The only thing I have to argue with is this," says Radelet. "I tell young people you may be substantially the same in 1990, when you compare your first job with staying on welfare. But in 1995, if you're on welfare, you're still at the same point, at ground level. But if you've established a job history, chances are very good that your salary will have gone up."

Keith White, 19, dropped out of Detroit's Northern High in 1987. He worked at McDonalds. He looked for higher-paying jobs. Then his friends promised him a high-paying position that required some business smarts, but not a diploma.

He started selling drugs. He made \$500 a day.

"Once you make that money, you don't want to work for \$3.35 frying hamburgers. The money blinds you. It turns you on and out," he said.

What opened his eyes was knowing—and watching—drug dealers who died.

"For a few months, I was a high roller. But I figured out I wasn't going to live if I stayed in it. The lifespan seems very short. To survive in drugs is very rare."

Five months into a GED-Job Training program, he recites a self-analytical, esteem-building philosophy inculcated in him by the instructors at the Metropolitan Detroit Youth Foundation.

"Working builds your character. Easy money buys you

"They told me I was smart. I was a good worker. But I didn't have an education and that would only get me another quarter a year."

clothes and cars. But when you're doing it the easy way, you can't be proud. You're selling drugs to somebody with a habit and, man, you're doing danger to your own people."

Teenagers who drop out of school to have children are prime candidates for what Steel calls the "dependency economy"—those who find how hard it is to break the welfare cycle and get into the job market. Lynette Hudson, 21, understands this well. She spent two years working at a suburban Detroit film service company, working machines that thread film into video cassettes. She earned \$4.25 an hour, up from \$4. The boss told her the most she could get would be an extra quarter every year.

"It was a dead-end job. I wanted to move up," said Lynette, who quit to have her third child.

She dropped out of Detroit's Cody High School to have a baby at 15. When she tried to go back, she couldn't find babysitters, or when she did, she couldn't keep them. Her mother, an alcoholic, was no help.

Only now is she back in school, determined to make it through a GED program and take further training in computer processing.

"If you don't have a college education or some kind of trade, it's extremely hard to get anywhere," said Hudson. "I found that out. They told me I was smart. I was a good worker, but I didn't have an education and that would only get me another quarter a year."

"I want to feel satisfied that I know I went back to complete my education and move on to better things. I don't want my kids to make my mistakes," she said.

State Efforts

About half the people on welfare in Michigan are high school dropouts, state officials said. The link between welfare and

dropouts led Michigan Gov. James Blanchard to institute his welfare-reform program, Job Start. It seeks to get people off welfare by first ensuring that they earn their high school diplomas.

Two-thirds of the 11,000 statewide participants in Job Start are located in Wayne County, where Detroit is the county seat. All able-bodied 18-to-25-year-old welfare recipients in the area who are single and have no children must participate in Job Start or be cut off from welfare.

So 20-year-old David Brock, a dropout who has been earning about \$250 monthly in welfare since September, has no choice. Job Start's goals are now his.

Brock says he wants to earn his general equivalency diploma (GED) through the Job Start program. But he also wants to learn about computers, get a job better than the \$2.51 an hour plus tips he earns during a 12-hour-a-week stint at a downtown fast food restaurant, and pay off debts he incurred when he buried his 69-year-old father in December.

He still owes the funeral home about \$140 and he hopes someday soon to earn enough money to buy a tombstone for his dad's grave.

Brock dropped out around the eleventh grade "because I wanted stuff. I wanted independence. I wanted to establish my own house."

For three years, he worked as an assistant manager at a Coney Island. He earned \$4 an hour during the midnight shift, dishing up hot dogs slathered with chili sauce from behind bulletproof barriers. Off work at 7 a.m., he'd go to the grocery store to work from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. And then on some evenings, he'd take a bus to a suburban shopping mall, where he sold sporting goods.

He eased up on that schedule over a year ago. His health was deteriorating, his stomach seemed prone to ulcer attacks and the Coney Island was sold to another owner. And his father was becoming increasingly ill.

His last job, before collecting welfare, was at a downtown Detroit all-night restaurant. He was a short-order cook. He earned about \$2.50 an hour, plus some occasional tips, and the money came under-the-table.

He now shares a rented house with two other men in a neighborhood that abuts a historic Detroit enclave of mansions. The rent is \$250 a month, and \$75 of his \$250 Job Start monthly allotment goes to pay the rent.

He'd like to earn "at least \$12 an hour" so that he can "get a nice home, a car, go through college." But what he's likely to get from Job Start is about \$5 an hour.

The state has contracted initially with private firms for some 2,000 jobs, mostly as retail clerks, cashiers, hospital workers and material handlers, at this rate. There will be a handful of paramedic and fire-fighting jobs at \$11 an hour.

And if a participant isn't placed in one of those positions, the state guarantees them community service jobs, such as cleaning roadsides and parks. Those jobs, a last resort, would be for 35 hours a week at minimum wage.

Corporate Programs

Besides providing on-the-job training and lending support for the Detroit Compact, the auto companies are sponsoring their own programs to help prepare workers.

Ford Motor Co. is developing a high school pilot program dubbed the Ford Academy of Manufacturing Sciences. The program will be instituted in one Detroit high school and one suburban high school next fall, said Ray Byers, Ford's educational affairs manager.

With a series of four sequential courses, beginning in the junior year of high school, Ford wants to develop interest among young people in science and manufacturing. It would focus on technology, computers and computer-aided design. For the summers in between, Ford will help place students in various manufacturing jobs, either at the company or supplier firms.

If it works, the program may be replicated in cities where Ford operates major plants. The program, said Byers, will not necessarily be geared to the best and the brightest. Ford will be looking for kids reading at grade level and who have algebra experience.

Chrysler this year is initiating a reading program called Running Start, aimed at every single first-grader in 10 cities where the automaker has operations. The \$2.1-million grant to Reading Is Fundamental is the largest ever made by the Chrysler Corporation Fund for a single project. The money will be used to buy books for an estimated 100,000 youngsters in 10 communities.

Too Little, Too Late

Some say the effort by industry is too little, and more than a little late to help a whole generation of young people.

With layoffs and financial problems, the auto companies have directed much of their educational efforts to making sure their current workforce can keep up with technological changes, and retraining and job placement for those who've been laid-off in the decade-long downturn.

As much as the school district appreciates business involvement in bolstering the schools, it won't mean much to Detroit school children unless those same industries provide jobs.

Radelet, director of Metropolitan Detroit Youth Foundation, said industry must make jobs available in the city.

"A lot of times the business community gives lip service or gets behind a notion that doesn't require a lot on their part and isn't going to help a lot of people," said Radelet.

A few years ago, a well-known Detroit-area manufacturer, which Radelet would not name, promised job-training graduates of the Foundation \$8- or \$9-an-hour jobs.

"It was a two-year program and the whole notion of it was to take kids, who were having difficulty in school, and monitor them. If they graduated, the company was going to take them. But there was an economic slowdown and the jobs never materialized."

About 65 young people, once promised \$10-an-hour jobs, ended up with \$4-an-hour work.

"What is necessary is a metropolitan commitment to the city of Detroit. What I mean by that is that growth continues on the fringes of the metropolitan area that is no benefit to a 20-year-old black youngster in Detroit," said Radelet.

"If I'm a 20-year-old Detroiter, and I'm looking at an entry-level job of \$4-per-hour or \$4.50-per-hour, and to get started I need benefits and I need transportation—well, it's not enough to get me started. . . ."

As much as the school district appreciates business involvement in bolstering the schools, it won't mean much to Detroit school children unless those same industries provide jobs.

FUTURE VIEWS:

INVESTIGATING YOUTH AND THE WORKFORCE

Covering the story of first jobs and job preparedness requires more than writing features about what kids are doing for summer jobs or focusing on exciting school-to-work programs or student-run businesses. It involves probing the social and economic fabric of a community and understanding what must be expected of young people in a shrinking workforce and an increasingly global economy. While the story reveals much about youth attitudes and expectations, it also examines the vitality of local and regional enterprise, the adequacy of education and job training, and problems of community solidarity and support, demographics, and social welfare.

To understand more about how young people view their jobs and the world of work, EWA compiled a series of questions to ask young people. Youth to be interviewed were divided into two distinct groups—workers currently in the labor force full-time and those still in school and working part-time.

Young Workers

The Workplace

What do young people in a cross section of jobs actually do? How much responsibility is granted by the employer? What is the quality of the work environment? Does this affect their performance? Is time well spent? Do the employers value their contributions?

Earnings and Benefits

What kind of salaries and benefits do young people receive? What do they use the money for? How does this differ between young single workers and those with family responsibilities?

Local Conditions

How might the state of the local economy affect attitudes and how have attitudes toward work changed since they began working or took on family responsibilities?

Networks and Support

How do young workers out of school find jobs and who was influential in helping them get hired? How do different family and racial backgrounds affect how they find out about work and what they intend to do? Is this help more available for some groups than others? What was the role of schools, community organizations, parents, relatives, mentors, neighbors, and friends in preparing them for work? Did they receive any special job training or career counseling? How effective was it?

First Jobs and the Future

Do young workers see their first jobs as a springboard for careers, as stepping stones to better jobs, or as an inevitable next step after school, unconnected with career development? Do they think they will have to go back to school to lead the kind of lives they want? What sort of resources do they think they will need, and are these resources available? What do they think their biggest obstacles will be in attaining these goals, and what support do they receive from their families, communities? What are their visions of the future and how do they differ?

General and Vocational Students

The Schools

How do current students rate the quality of their schooling? How well are vocational programs linked to job opportunities? Are programs up-to-date?

How well do teachers adapt to learning styles of non-academically oriented students? What are the opportunities for experiential learning? Do the schools have alternative education programs that provide work experience? Do students feel equitable resources are channeled into vocational and career education as for college preparatory programs? Do some have a better shot of getting good jobs than others?

Part-time Work

What kind of part-time jobs are available? What are their work environments like? Do employers give part-time employees responsibility?

What do they do with their wages? How do part-time jobs affect school work and social life? How do students feel about working part-time? How does it compare to their attitudes toward school?

What role do adults play in their after-school work? Are they supportive, fearful, angry? Did they suggest that the kids work in the first place?

Setting the Context

Reporters will want to talk to local business leaders, teachers, job training experts, political leaders, employment agencies, state economic advisers, employers, and parents to determine how work is changing, the competency of the workforce, growth areas, manpower needs and supply. Compare what is happening in your community with other cities and towns to put the story in regional context. Examine what factors—migration of jobs, inadequate training and job skills—affect young workers in your community. How do changing demographics and special features of the community affect the ability to prepare a labor force? What are the barriers to finding good jobs?

Reporters will want to investigate whether old networks for finding work are still strong. How has the community changed and how do job opportunities vary among different groups?

Corporate policies and practices will continue to have a major influence on job preparedness. What steps is corporate America taking to deal with the labor shortage? And how will this shortage affect youth unemployment? Will companies become the next major provider to youth employment training programs? What are local corporations looking for in young employees and what do they think of their new recruits?

Last fall, in an attempt to gain more perspective on how the media is covering youth and work, EWA conducted a national contest, soliciting the best work that has appeared in the print media and on television.

An example of a truly broad-scoped treatment of the job

preparedness issue appeared in the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* on May 1-2, 1988. The two-day series, given front page prominence, detailed the issues and suggested paths toward solving the problems. The series covered an impressive array of angles on the story, including national and regional trends as well as local developments and implications. The balance of interviews, background data, and feature stories was also impressive.

In the words of A. James Memmott, managing editor of the paper, "We told the stories through the eyes of ordinary students and workers, their mentors, teachers, and parents. We explained why the lack of basic skills alarms companies in Rochester and nationwide; why some parents and community leaders remain suspicious of corporate interference; and how the business/education partnership goes back at least 80 years."

Additional stories profiled two successful partnerships between schools and business and a promising training program at a local General Motors division.

Further Investigation

Susan P. Curran, deputy director of the Center for Human Resources of the Heller Graduate School at Brandeis University says that reporters should be aware of three areas not covered by the popular press or in technical journals and reports.

- The role of adult-youth relationships in job training.
- The importance of interaction between education, labor, and social services at the state and local level.
- The value of real work experience (for pay) for young people. This becomes imperative as we see more youth coming to programs without knowledge of work. Many are from third generation welfare families; they need positive and real experience, not make or mock work.

Larry Brown, president of 70001 Training and Employment Institute in Washington, D.C., offers some specific issues the media might cover. These include:

- What can schools do to better prepare young people for the workforce? What are they doing now? Are schools adjusting their curricula? Are there efforts to build in workplace relevance to existing curricula?

—Too often, professionals who work in the youth employment and training area are among our "forgotten workforce," doomed to low pay and diminished self-esteem. As labor shortages affect the general workforce, they will have an amplified effect on education and human services where pay and esteem are low. What will this mean for the people continue to serve in these organizations?

—Profiles of successful program and program models that work to abate the tragedy of youth unemployment. Often many of the stories that are produced on the issues ignore the solution. This is a disservice to the very people the reporters are writing about. Young people need to know that help is available and where to go for it. There isn't a problem among young people that isn't being solved somewhere.

—In the past, Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) money that was set aside for youth unemployment training was often not used for this purpose at all, resulting in thousands of youth going unserved by the legislation. How will changes in JTPA affect service to young people?

Regardless of the initial approach reporters decide to take, it is critical to try to develop a context for the programs and problems covered. If any picture emerges from the work for *FIRST JOBS*, it is that what constitutes support for the school to work transition in this country is a patchwork of small programs, individual efforts and initial policies. Developing a more skilled workforce is a major issue for the future, and as of now, the United States has little in the way of policies or comprehensive structures at any level in place to ease the change. Here are some areas to watch.

- To encourage young workers to master skills needed in the workforce, some corporations support introducing a nationally standardized test for high school graduates that would measure an array of basic skills and academic achievement. They are considering building a national database to inform companies about the academic, occupational, and personal skills of young workers. This would motivate students to work harder in school and help businesses identify qualified workers who would need less training on the job, business leaders contend.

- In October 1989, the Labor Department took a step toward further defining what basic skills young people should have. The Department will establish a commission to develop "national competency guidelines" to be used in school curricula and training programs. The Educational Testing Service is developing a diagnostic assessment to measure the basic-skills proficiencies of JTPA applicants and recipients of unemployment insurance benefits. The tests, which will be developed by June 1991, will help business better train employees by letting them know what skills new workers are bringing to the job.

- Reporters might wish to present some fresh views from other countries that have broadly based apprenticeship and training programs. Of particular interest are innovations in Sweden, West Germany, Great Britain and France. These nations, according to William E. Nothdurft in *School Works*, "have an historical commitment to human investment as a fundamental economic principle, and the commitment is shared by government, business, and labor alike."

In the U.S. today, there are formal apprenticeship programs for some 415 trades, involving 303,000 registered apprentices, according to "The Learning Enterprise," a report from the American Society for Training and Development. More than 60 percent of the registered apprentices were in building trade occupations, nearly all of them unionized.

- The U.S. is challenged to provide new opportunities for all, and to reduce the cost of social supports, such as welfare. An emerging story will be what happens to those cut off from the welfare rolls as a result of reforms.

According to Paul Weckstein, director of the Washington Office of the Center for Law and Education, "Pulling young people off welfare and into low paying jobs too often results in substituting one form of poverty for another." Weckstein says that sub-poverty wage jobs have become an accepted part of our economy, creating a "political and economic barrier to raising welfare levels to the point where they provide a decent standard of living."

APPENDIX:

ABOUT THE REPORTERS

Betty Cork is editor and publisher of *Health News*, a trade publication for medical professionals in the Southeast. She was for many years an education writer for the *Montgomery Advertiser*. She has been a reporter for the *Alabama Journal* and hosted and produced a statewide news program for public television. She has won several awards for her education and editorial writing.

Catherine Foster has been a staff writer for *The Christian Science Monitor*. Over the nine years, she has covered education, as well as other subjects, from arts to women's issues, housing to land use. She has been published by *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Reader's Digest*, and has been featured as well on *MonitoRadio* and *Today's Monitor*, broadcasting offshoots of *The Monitor*.

Dennis McDonald is a freelance writer based in Spirit Lake, Iowa. His as-yet unpublished first novel, *The Limits of the Land*, is set in the not-so-distant future and explores the plight of the McCully family, the last subsistence farmers on the Great Plains. He recently completed a series of articles on the status of American Indian education for *Education Week*.

Patricia D. Montemurri is a general assignment and education reporter for the *Detroit Free Press*, covering the Detroit Public Schools and the state university system in Michigan. Prior to joining the *Free Press* in 1979, she worked for the Associated Press. Her reporting has led her to cover the Pope, punk rockers, the 1984 and 1988 presidential races in Michigan and national political conventions.

Lori Olszewski is a staff writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. For many years, she was a staff writer for the *Post-Tribune* of Gary, Ind., and for *The Times* of Hammond, Ind. She has won several awards including the 1984 Associated Press award for her work on working and welfare and the 1983 First Place Award for Excellence in Reporting on the American Economy from the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

Sheppard Ransom has worked as an editorial consultant with numerous national education associations. He was a staff writer for *Education Week*, edited several higher education newsletters, and managed an education news syndicate for daily newspapers. He won a special citation from EWA in 1986 for his series of articles, *Schooling in Japan: The Paradox in the Pattern*. Recently, he has been named director of education programs for the Gallagher-Widmeyer Group.

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Table 1: Indicators of Adequacy of State Action—Children's Defense Fund

	High School Graduation ¹				Youth Unemployment ²				State Youth Employment Initiatives ³		
	Percent of 9th Graders Who Graduate Four Years Later		1982-87 Change	Is State's Progress Adequate? ⁴	Percent of Youth Ages 16-19 Who Are Unemployed		1982-88 Change	Is State's Progress Adequate? ⁴	School-To-Work Transition Program	Job Creation or Service/Conservation Corps	Is State's Investment Adequate? ⁴
	1982	1987			1982	1988					
	Percent	Percent	Percent		Percent	Percent	Percent				
United States Total	69.5%	71.1%	2.3%	Yes 29/ No 22	23.2	15.3	-34.1	Yes 25/ No 26	Yes 16/ No 35	Yes 23/ No 28	Yes 28/ No 23
Alabama	63.4	70.2	10.7	Yes	31.6	17.6	-44.3	Yes	No	No	No
Alaska	64.3	66.7	3.7	Yes	17.5	17.9	2.3	No	No	Yes	Yes
Arizona	63.4	64.4	1.6	No	25.2	17.4	-31.0	No	No	Yes	Yes
Arkansas	73.4	77.5	5.6	Yes	29.1	21.0	-27.8	No	No	No	No
California	60.1	66.1	10.0	Yes	23.4	15.7	-32.9	No	No	Yes	Yes
Colorado	70.9	73.7	3.9	Yes	18.6	18.4	-1.1	No	No	Yes	Yes
Connecticut	70.6	80.5	14.0	Yes	18.3	5.5	-69.9	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Delaware	68.2	70.1	2.8	Yes	24.9	10.0	-59.8	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
District of Columbia	56.9	55.5	-2.5	No	36.9	20.0	-45.8	Yes	No	No	No
Florida	60.2	58.6	-2.7	No	22.6	14.0	-38.1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgia	65.0	62.5	-3.8	No	21.2	18.5	-12.7	No	Yes	No	Yes
Hawaii	74.9	70.8	-5.5	No	22.3	10.7	-52.0	Yes	No	No	No
Idaho	74.4	78.8	5.9	Yes	18.4	15.3	-16.8	No	No	No	No
Illinois	76.1	75.7	-.5	No	23.3	16.3	-30.0	No	No	Yes	Yes
Indiana	71.7	73.7	2.8	Yes	24.8	12.0	-31.6	Yes	No	No	No
Iowa	84.1	86.4	2.7	Yes	17.4	15.2	-12.6	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kansas	80.7	82.1	1.7	No	11.6	13.0	12.1	No	No	No	No
Kentucky	65.9	67.4	2.3	Yes	27.6	20.6	-25.4	No	No	No	No
Louisiana	52.9	60.1	13.6	Yes	27.6	28.9	4.7	No	No	No	No
Maine	70.1	79.3	13.1	Yes	22.8	10.6	-33.5	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Maryland	74.8	74.5	-.4	No	23.6	15.6	-33.9	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Massachusetts	76.4	76.5	.1	No	21.4	9.7	-54.7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Michigan	71.6	62.4	-12.8	No	28.7	17.5	-39.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Minnesota	88.2	90.6	2.7	Yes	14.3	10.2	-28.7	No	No	Yes	Yes
Mississippi	61.3	64.8	5.7	Yes	31.1	27.4	-11.9	No	No	No	No
Missouri	74.2	74.4	.3	No	21.7	20.0	-7.8	No	No	No	No
Montana	78.7	86.2	9.5	Yes	19.8	16.8	-15.2	No	No	Yes	Yes
Nebraska	81.9	86.7	5.9	Yes	16.2	13.4	-17.3	No	No	No	No
Nevada	64.8	72.1	11.3	Yes	22.8	13.3	-41.7	Yes	No	No	No
New Hampshire	77.0	72.7	-5.6	No	16.2	10.0	-38.3	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
New Jersey	76.5	77.2	.9	No	22.5	10.4	-53.8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Mexico	69.4	71.7	3.3	Yes	24.2	24.5	1.2	No	No	No	No
New York	63.4	62.9	-.8	No	22.3	11.8	-47.1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Carolina	67.1	67.8	1.0	No	23.6	12.4	-47.5	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
North Dakota	83.9	88.4	5.4	Yes	13.1	11.7	-10.7	No	No	No	No
Ohio	77.5	82.8	6.8	Yes	27.5	15.6	-43.3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	70.8	72.6	2.5	Yes	13.1	14.8	13.0	No	No	No	No
Oregon	72.4	72.8	.6	No	25.6	13.6	-46.9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pennsylvania	76.0	78.7	3.6	Yes	23.3	13.9	-40.3	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Rhode Island	72.7	69.4	-4.5	No	27.0	9.7	-64.1	Yes	No	No	No
South Carolina	63.8	66.9	4.9	Yes	24.4	13.1	-46.3	Yes	No	No	No
South Dakota	82.7	79.7	-3.6	No	12.0	11.0	-8.3	No	No	No	No
Tennessee	67.8	67.8	.0	No	34.3	14.8	-56.9	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Texas	63.6	65.1	2.4	Yes	20.4	21.8	6.9	No	No	No	No
Utah	75.0	80.6	7.5	Yes	19.0	12.2	-35.8	Yes	No	No	No
Vermont	79.6	78.0	-2.0	No	17.4	5.5	-68.4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Virginia	73.8	74.0	.3	No	25.8	12.9	-50.0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Washington	76.1	77.8	2.2	No	25.1	16.6	-33.9	No	No	Yes	Yes
West Virginia	66.3	76.2	14.9	Yes	32.0	26.8	-16.3	No	No	No	No
Wisconsin	83.1	85.4	2.8	Yes	21.6	6.5	-69.9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wyoming	72.4	89.3	23.3	Yes	13.0	13.8	6.2	No	No	No	No

Source: Children's Defense Fund *Children 1990: A Report Card*, January 1990.¹U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation, *State Education Performance Chart: Student Performance, Resource Inputs, State Reforms, and Population Characteristics, 1982 and 1988* (1989), Columns 15 and 16. For public schools only.²Definition: Has the state increased its graduation rate by an amount greater than the national average?³U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment, 1982* (May 1983), Table 12; 1988, (May 1989), Table 12. Definition: Proportion of persons in the labor force age 16 to 19 who are unemployed—that is, not employed but looking for work.⁴Definition: Has the state reduced the percent of youth who are unemployed by an amount greater than the national rate of reduction?⁵Children's Defense Fund survey of selected youth employment agencies, 1989.⁶Definition: Does the state allocate funds either to find or create jobs for young people not going on to college?

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